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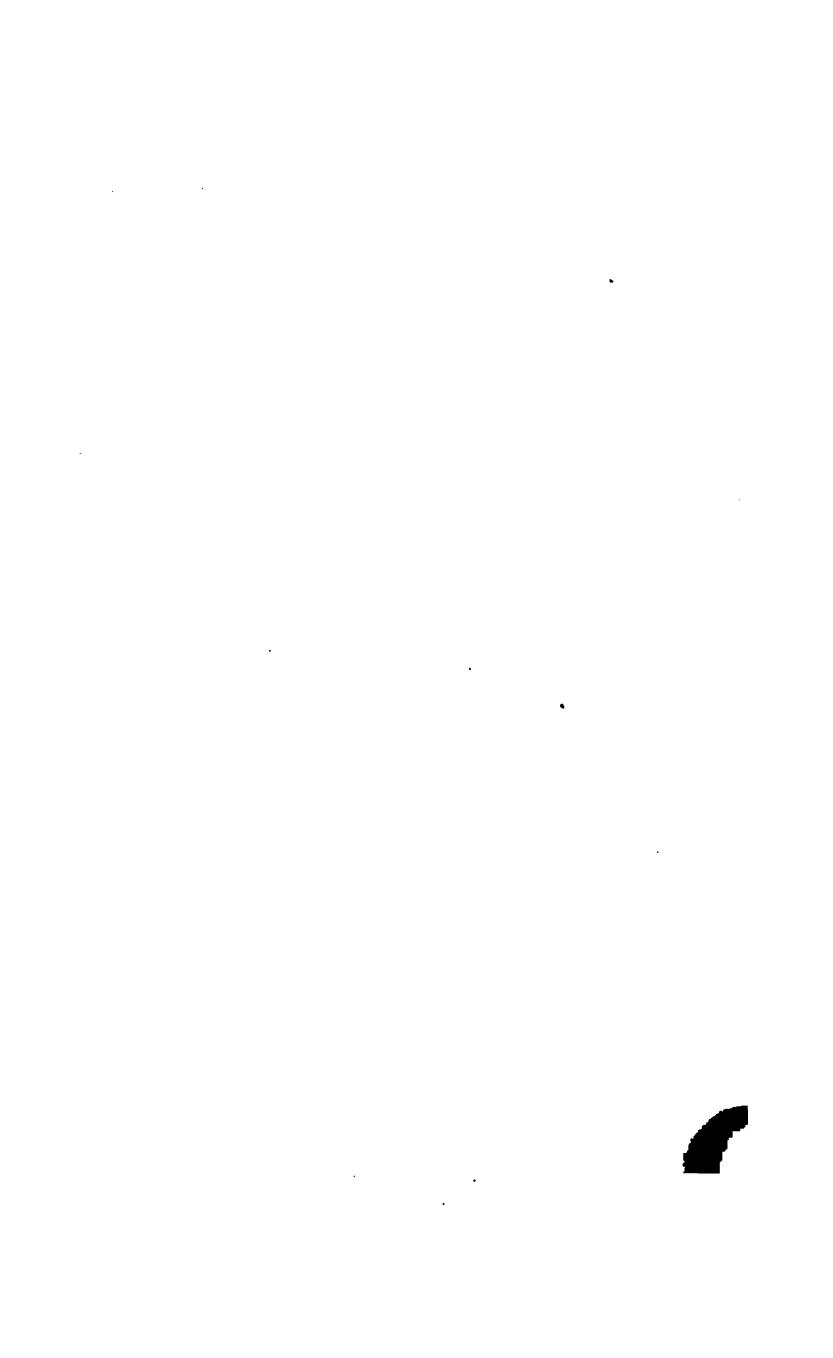
LIGHT
FROM
THE
LOWLY





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BLESSED HENRY DE TREVISO.—Page 49.

LIGHT FROM THE LOWLY

OR

**Lives of Persons who sanctified themselves in
humble positions**

BY THE

REV. FRANCIS BUTIÑA, S.J.

TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH

BY THE

REV. W. McDONALD, D.D.

With Twelve Illustrations

BY

W. C. MILLS.

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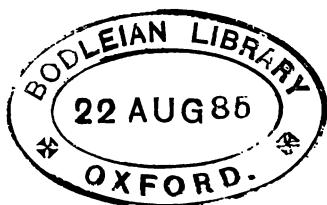
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LIGHT FROM THE LOWLY.

Series VII.

ST. ARNOLD, MUSICIAN.

I.

UNDER the wing of the magnanimous son of Pepin, the glorious conqueror of the Lombards in Italy, the Moors in Spain, the Avari in Hungary, the Slavs in Bohemia, and the fierce Saxons and Danes; under the wing of the illustrious protector of the Church, Charlemagne, everything good, everything beautiful, everything great, and found an atmosphere of prosperity and life. A devout subject of the Holy See, just in time of peace, powerful in war, an ardent promoter of the divine glory, he appeared to vie with the Lord—he in promoting the magnificence of worship in the temples and extending the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and God in prospering his enterprises and adding to his states and dominions. Amongst the great men who flourished by the side of this illustrious prince, the lowest place is not certainly held by the charitable servant of God, whose life we are going to relate. Critics dispute about the native country

St. Arnold: some say he was from artistic Greece, others from Recia, in Germany. What is certain is that he lived at Charlemagne's court as one of the principal

musicians to that monarch. All the inhabitants of the palace dearly loved Arnold, as well on account of his skill in music, in which he surpassed by his good taste and execution, as of his polished and Christian manners, adorned with all the virtues becoming a saint. Never did he prostitute his art with infamous productions calculated to arouse sensuality; but, like David, he filled the air with sweetest harmonies, which at the same time pleased the senses and calmed the passions, inspiring chastity, devotion, and meekness.

Though the saint was conspicuous in all solid and perfect virtues, he was yet distinguished for his mercy to the weak. Widows, orphans, the sick, all those who felt the weight of misery in this vale of misfortunes, found in the pious musician consolation, relief, and protection. Charity is industrious, and the renowned artist availed himself of every occasion to do good to his neighbour. The king and his nobles were in one of his country-houses, where there was an extensive and flourishing forest. The surrounding inhabitants, despite the extreme want of fuel which they felt, were afraid to cut a twig, lest they should incur the rigours of the law. When Arnold found out the need of those poor farmers, he offered to intercede for them with the emperor. The latter was going to a great feast, when Arnold presented himself and explained to him the poor people's necessity. Anxious for the well-being of his vassals, as also to encourage the saint's piety, he promised to give to the poor as much as the servant of God could run round during the dinner. The charitable musician, satisfied with the issue of his prayer, on the moment mounted a fleet steed, and before the end of dinner had gone round a wood five miles in circumference. The emperor was astonished, but putting full confidence in the saint's veracity, who would not tell a lie for all the treasures of earth, in presence of his *courtiers* he took a ring off his finger and gave it to *Arnold as a pledge that he made him a donation of the*

wood for the relief of the poor. It is not hard to imagine the joy and delight with which the glad news was received by the people; but the servant of God's satisfaction was not less in handing them over possession of their new property. On this and like occasions his gratification beamed in his face, and in nothing else had he such pleasure as in succouring the needy. Hence, after fulfilling his obligations to God and his sovereign, his principal work was the alleviation of the indigent. He availed himself of his musical skill to obtain alms from the courtiers and nobles for them. And except what he required to keep up his position, he distributed all he possessed to them.

II.

Such was his anxiety to lay up imperishable riches. He also added to his works of mercy all the other means usually employed by fervent Christians to secure their eternal salvation, and above all prayer and fasting. At that early date even there reigned amongst the faithful a holy enthusiasm to visit the shrine of St. James; and our saint, anxious to fortify his faith and inflame his charity at sight of that monument of the piety and fervour of our ancestors, undertook a pilgrimage to Compostella. The Lord was content with his good intention, for when he entered Spain for the purpose, he was stopped by the famine which succeeded the irruption of the enemies of the faith. Seeing, then, that he could not safely go forward, he remained in the religious city of Gerona, awaiting a more favourable opportunity to pursue his journey.

He lodged in a pious matron's house, and spent the day partly in work to earn his bread, and partly in prayer and the exercises of piety and mercy. Though away from his own land he still found delight in drying tears, relieving the necessities of the poor as far as he could, and consoling the afflicted with the hope of the ineffable joys of paradise. He spent a year in Gerona, or

some neighbouring village—an example of humility, meekness, penance and all Christian virtues. If at any time he joined the choir on festival days, far from going out during the sermon, like many musicians, he remained listening reverently to the Divine Word; and from all he heard he found a wreath of Christian maxims for the regulation and direction of his spirit.

One of the truths which powerfully moved his heart was the terrible account which we shall have to give to God of every instant of our life. Like another Jerome, he imagined he heard the trumpet of the final judgment and the voice of the angel calling on the dead to arise, and saw the graves open, and the dry bones move and come forth from the earth and the sea, and reunited body and soul, present themselves in the valley of Josephat to receive their final sentence—a sentence condemning the wicked to eternal torments, and giving eternal bliss to the good. Who is there so foolish as not to be spurred on to virtue by the consideration of these truths? By their light our musician trampled on human respect; and considering his mortal existence as hanging by a slight thread, which might be broken at any moment by the breath of death, he regulated his actions like one who might be called at any hour before his Judge. Guided by this holy fear, as soon as he felt he had committed any fault, he hastened to purify his soul in the waters of penance, and entered with renewed courage on the way of eternal life.

He found at last that his journey, considering the circumstances of the times, was impracticable, and resolved to return to his own country. For the Moors, whom, in punishment of the depraved morals of kings, nobles, and vassals, the Lord had let loose over poor Spain, yet infested the greater part of the Peninsula; and under the command of Abderraman swept down on the Christian towns like a devastating torrent, levelling everything in its course, and scattering destruction and *death in all directions*. These calamities with which Divine

Justice scourged the sinful people, prevented pilgrims from reaching the shrine of St. James in Galicia.

When Arnold got home he hastened by his good works to crown his holy life. After distributing all he had to the poor, he exchanged earth for heaven, where his spirit shall enjoy for all eternity the enchanting harmonies of bliss. He died in the village of Arusuilre, and was buried in an oratory, in which up to the beginning of the eighteenth century the ring which Charlemagne gave him was preserved as a memento of the holy musician's heroic charity.

ST. NEVOLON, SHOEMAKER.

I.

IN the populous city of Faenza, in the Romagna, there lived, about the middle of the thirteenth century an obscure artisan, who in his humble trade combined the lot of Mary and Martha—that is, the contemplative and the active life, and drew down on himself a beneficent shower of divine grace. This holy man was called Nevolon, a native of the city, and a shoemaker by trade. Carried away in his youth by bad company and the vanities of the world, he became the play-toy of his unsubdued passions, and wandered from the path of salvation, till at twenty-four years of age the Lord afflicted him with a serious illness, and made him see the abyss on whose brink he was standing, and the frivolity and poison of the pleasure whose glare had blinded him. Struck by a ray of divine grace, he took St. James of Spain as his patron, and determined on a complete change of life. When he recovered he gave unequivocal proofs of the sincerity of his repentance. Not content with repudiating all worldly pleasures and avoiding the occasions of sin, he fasted three days in the week, and lived on bread and water on the fast days prescribed by the Church, to root out the attacks of sensuality, to which he had given loose rein.

St. Gregory relates in his dialogues that a religious man saw a magnificent palace prepared in heaven for a poor shoemaker with whom he was acquainted, and only on Saturday was any work done in his shop. Investigating the cause of this phenomenon in the habits of the holy shoemaker, called Deusdedit, he found that on Saturday he was accustomed to divide among the poor at the door of the basilica of St. Peter, the surplus of his week's wages. Our saint also resolved to redeem his sins with alms, according to the advice of the Holy Ghost, and build for himself a sumptuous and indestructible palace in heaven, and for the purpose he lent his means to the Lord through the hands of the poor, not alone on Saturday but every day of the week. From the time of his conversion he made the indigent and weak his friends, and consecrated to them the fruits of his labour. If he saw a poor man without shoes he provided him with a pair, and if with bad ones he mended them for him. In a spirit of mortification, not vain curiosity, he went on a pilgrimage to the tombs of the Apostles, and visited the shrine of St. James of Compostella, in Galicia. He passed the journey in prayer or in holy conversation with fellow-travellers whom he met with. He was not ashamed to ask alms along his route like a beggar, after distributing all he had to the needy, even a portion of his clothes, and he suffered with resignation and joy the rebuffs and repulses with which he was met.

The common enemy had abundance of trials prepared for him on his return home. He aroused the saint's wife against him, and sharpened her tongue to wound him. Fearing her husband's liberality would reduce her to indigence, she lost all respect for him and applied all kinds of epithets to him. The good artisan without *being ruffled*, or yielding in his well-considered resolves, *listened to her with unaltered patience*. The saint knew *that if a hard substance strikes a soft one, there is no noise; and acting on the saying of the Wise Man, that*

sweet, soft words, said with love and charity, multiply friends, and pacify adversaries, he always avoided hard and biting expressions, which only excite greater rancour, and aggravate the wound. On this account, when he found his wife little disposed to listen to reason, he adroitly changed the conversation, and eluded the enemy's attacks, thus completely disarming the poor woman.

II.

One day, a beggar asked an alms, and the charitable shoemaker told his wife to go and get him some bread. "Where shall I get it," said she, "since you emptied the cupboard?" The saint insisted, and she protested that there was not a bit of bread in the house; but he said to her, in a tone of command: "I tell you, in the name of God, to give this poor man some bread." The woman went to the cupboard and found it completely full, though she was certain that she had left it empty. She was so astonished that she did not dare to contradict the saint any more, but, on the contrary, repenting of her crookedness, in future always seconded his mercy, and tried to be a faithful imitator of his heroic virtues.

She wished to accompany him on a pilgrimage he intended to make to Rome and Santiago of Galicia. They both set out, then, mutually encouraging each other to offer to God the sacrifices of their painful journey. In the course of it the poor woman was laid up with a serious illness, and had to interrupt her march. The good shoemaker did not leave her an instant, but did all he could to alleviate and sweeten her sufferings. During her sickness she felt a longing desire to eat cherries, and said to her husband: "Ah! if I could only get a good feed of cherries I would be well in a moment." "But, woman," he answered, "don't you see we are in the depth of winter, and you take a fancy for fruit when the trees are leafless and frozen!" But pitying her affliction, he withdrew from the house, and going on his knees, said: "O Lord, do Thou, who canst do all things

turn thy eyes on this thy servant. Console my poor wife, and bring us back to our own country, safe and sound, and we shall there serve Thee with all our strength." When his prayer was over he lifted his eyes to heaven, and there, among numerous withered trees he saw one green cherry-tree laden with fruit. The saint gratefully took some and gave them to his wife, who was suddenly cured on eating them. Melting with gratitude for this singular favour they prosecuted their journey, and returned home safely, as they had desired.

But it was God's will that he should lose his beloved consort, for the Lord took her to Himself soon after their return. Then the blessed servant of God, having nothing now to think of but himself, disposed of all his chattels, and gave what he possessed to poor widows, orphans, and the distressed; and trusting in Divine Providence went to visit the temples of the Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul. When he returned to Faenza he manifested singular zeal for the good of others, and gathering together some pious men, formed a confraternity dedicated to exercises of penance. Engaged at work during the day he dedicated his leisure hours to prayer and acts of mercy. His favourite church was that of St. Peter, which he attended whenever any ceremony was going on, and in which he sometimes spent entire nights keeping Jesus company in the Blessed Sacrament. He passed long hours on his knees with his hands raised to heaven in deep meditation. Reduced to extreme poverty by his generosity to the poor, and his anxiety to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, he took up his quarters in a little house of Friar Laurence, so called on account of being a hermitage in which five members of the Order of Vallumbrosa lived. Here he led a most austere life. Besides his rigorous fasts he slept *on hard boards, or the bare ground, taking but a very short sleep, and in such a position that it was an exercise of mortification rather than a rest.* He never left the *town except to repeat his favourite excursions to Santiago of Galicia, which entailed on him immense privations.*

III.

Nine times did he visit the sacred body of Spain's Apostle, and in almost all the Lord worked some wonder in our saint's favour. He once wandered into such a wild place that he knew not how to advance or recede. Then a young man appeared leading a horse, and making him mount rescued him from his difficulty. The saint returned thanks to God, and his protector St. James, and continued his journey. The devil also attacked him with temptations against the virtue of chastity, and he once plunged into a freezing river to overcome them, in imitation of other saints. On his sixth pilgrimage he met with a leper. He was moved to compassion, and wishing to give him a proof of how much value in his judgment infirmities borne with resignation and patience were, he tenderly kissed his hands, and would have embraced him only he disappeared from his sight, filling his heart with inexplicable sweetness. We may believe it was Jesus who thus appeared in the form of a leper to give him an opportunity of exercising his heroic charity. On another occasion, happening to lodge in a bad woman's house, he miraculously converted her to a better life. One day, when pressed by hunger, he asked an innkeeper for a piece of bread for God's sake. The latter told him that without money he gave no bread to anyone, and if he had it not to go and beg it. At this answer the servant of God raised his eyes to heaven, beseeching the Father of the needy to supply his wants. When he finished his prayer he looked down and found the money he wanted on the ground. He bought bread from the innkeeper with it, but reminded him of the terrible sentence which the Lord will fulminate on the day of judgment against those who were hard to the poor.

One day, when engaged at their ordinary business, the inhabitants of Faenza suddenly heard the bells of the church which the saint used to frequent plaintively ring *for the dead,* without a human hand being seen to touch

them. Surprised at this wonder, and suspecting something was wrong with the holy shoemaker, they ran to his lodgings, and found him on his knees as if rapt in prayer. They called him and shook him, but found him dead, and on that moment the ringing ceased. When apprised of the miracle the bishop, accompanied by the clergy and civil authorities, went in search of the venerable remains, and gave them honourable burial. Devotion to him was propagated through the singular and miraculous favours obtained by those who had recourse to his intercession, and it was approved by Pius VII., on the 31st of May, 1817. The death of the saintly shoemaker took place on the 27th July, 1280; and his example should be an encouragement to those who have to work out their eternal salvation in any mechanical profession.



ST. THEODOTUS, PUBLICAN.

I.

It seems difficult to weave one's crown in a position naturally so difficult as is that of a publican; but what is impossible to the strength of nature is easy and practicable to that of grace, to which, as Nilus, an ocular witness and companion of our martyr, relates, the illustrious publican, whose life we are about to sketch, so perfectly corresponded. And let it not be imagined that all his glory is due to the invincible valour with which he gave his life in testimony of the Catholic faith; for in the very business he followed his virtues were so conspicuous that for them alone he would deserve a distinguished place among the most celebrated heroes of Christianity. Let the reader examine and judge.

Theodotus was a native of Ancyra, the capital of Galacia, and from his infancy was educated in a Christian manner by the pious virgin St. Thecusa. From his

youth he seemed to be preparing for the struggle in which he should gain by his death the laurel of victory; for, declaring war on his appetites, and subduing his passions, he ran like a giant along the path of virtue, and became the illustrious model of a good Christian. Temperance was his shield in his contests, mortification the source of his pleasures, prayer his anchor in storms, and charitable self-denial the fount of all his riches. He was married to a Christian woman, and always regulated his conduct by the rule laid down by St. Paul for married Christians. His tavern, far from being the retreat of ruffians, the hiding-place of thieves, and the scene of vice, which such establishments too often are, was a school of virtue, of which the owner was the master. The eyes saw nothing, the ears heard nothing in that tavern which did not savour of Christian charity. Those that frequented it, if they wished to be welcomed, had to accustom themselves to speak like good Catholics, and to act with the prudence and circumspection of such. Who now will wonder that not only the poor found help there but sinners repentance? The owner's high character and refined manners made the lascivious chaste, the drunkard temperate, the blasphemer guarded in his speech, the vindictive benevolent, the avaricious liberal. Nor were his conquests trifling, for many Jews and pagans converted there sealed the dogmas of our holy faith with their blood. It was a maxim of his that it is more glorious in a Christian to live in poverty than to have wealth without employing it in relief of the needy. He condemned a soft, idle life, and held that it unnerved the soldier of Jesus Christ, and that a man given to pleasures, even lawful ones, cannot aspire to the crown of martyrdom. His ardent zeal, superhuman prudence, and Christian meekness were reflected in all his works, and gained over to Jesus Christ all who had dealings with him. And God was so highly pleased with it all that He gave him the gift of miracles; and we read in *his Acts* that by prayer and the sole imposition of hand

he cured many sick. Thus was this athlete training to fight the battles of the Lord.

The fierce tempest which, after a spell of calm, caught the bark of Peter under Diocletian and Maximian, spread to the Christians of Galacia. It was a terrible tempest, in which seventeen thousand heroes received the crown of martyrdom;—a tempest all the more terrifying inasmuch as new and most cruel torments were invented for them, in which they were made to suffer slowly on racks and on hot gridirons, and in other ways, not so much for the purpose of ending their lives as of drawing them into apostasy. The edict published in Nicomedia, in 303, soon reached Ancyra, of which Theotecnus was appointed governor. He was a cruel, heartless, and sanguinary apostate, who, to advance himself with the prince, had promised to quickly eradicate the Christian name from the whole province. The report of the coming of this monster terrified the faithful, and almost depopulated the towns. The greater part of the Christians fled, some seeking an asylum among the wild beasts of the desert, some hiding in caves, and others taking refuge in the mountains to escape the fearful butchery. His acts were worse than the report. Along his route the temples of the Most High were razed to the ground, the houses of the Christians sacked, their goods confiscated, their women dishonoured, and blood flowed in torrents in all directions.

II.

When the fierce tyrant arrived at Ancyra, his spies, drunk with rapine and blood, hunted up the innocent Christians who remained, and loaded them with chains. Some of the fugitives, driven to it by hunger, delivered themselves up to the executioners, either to end their sufferings in a glorious death, or to obtain their liberty at the cost of their property. The prisons were crowded *with the soldiers of Christ* suffering for the faith, and *no one dared to go to console or succour them in their afflictions.* Only Theodotus, exposing himself to great

danger, ventured to bring them some encouragement. His trade protected him. In its exercise he attended to the confessors of the faith; and though it was prohibited under the pain of death, he buried the bodies of the martyrs, which were thrown to the dogs. His house, too, became the refuge of the afflicted, the school of the faithful, and the temple for the celebration of the divine mysteries. Who would look for Christians in a common tavern?

Theotecnus had ordered bread and wine that had been offered to the gods to be mixed with that sold in the shops, for the apostate knew that to eat such things was forbidden to the Christians, and was looked on as a sign of apostasy, so that the faithful should be reduced to famine or publicly profess their faith. His agents kept strict watch over the fulfilment of this order, and the poor Christians were in great straits, particularly with regard to offering the pure, holy, and immaculate Victim. As to themselves, they were resolved to die sooner than pollute their lips with impure meat or drink. The zealous solicitude of Theodotus met all these infernal tricks, and procured for the sufferers bread and wine without the mixture of abomination. He sold them at cost price, and thus enabled the faithful to make pure offerings on the altar, and provide the necessaries of life without injury to their conscience. And thus, on account of a calling legally authorised, Theodotus' tavern was converted into an Ark of Noe, to which the pure doves could fly that they might not be contaminated by the foul mud which covered the earth.

One of his friends, named Victor, fell into the tyrant's hands, and was put in prison. The priests of Diana accused him of having defamed their goddess by asserting that she had foul intercourse with her brother Apollo before the shrine of Delos, a crime of which even infamous women would be ashamed. They did not deny the crime, but yet clamoured against Victor, and demanded that he should burn incense before their strumpet deity. Some pagans advised him earnestly to obey the sacrilegious

order, reminding him of the honours and wealth the governor would heap on him, the atrocious torments to which he should otherwise be subjected, and the extermination of his family, condemned to perish in case of his refusal. "Do you not say," some of them remarked, "that your God is infinitely merciful? How, then, can He take it ill that you should try to free yourself and your relatives from destruction?" When Theodotus knew of the risk his friend was running, he managed to get into the prison by night to console him in his affliction, and animate him to constancy. "Listen not to their oily tongues," said the saint to him, "nor let their promises induce you to prefer lasciviousness to continence, injustice to duty, apostasy to religion. For God's sake, Victor, be not deceived; for the more flattering their promises the more certain the ruin you expose yourself to. Did not the Jews seduce the traitor Judas with like offers? And what were his thirty pieces of silver worth to him? Did he not hang himself and go to burn in hell for all eternity? Courage, my friend! a little suffering will gain for you an eternal and imperishable crown. How do you know what will happen you if you show the coward? God has promised His mercy to those who repent, but He has not promised this repentance to anyone, particularly if we abuse His very goodness to offend Him." Victor was animated by the holy conversation of Theodotus. He had suffered with constancy indescribable torments, and had the palm of victory in his hand, when yielding under the lash he asked for time to deliberate. A few moments more would have earned for him an eternity of glory; but the lictors desisted at his request, and sent him back to prison, where he soon expired, leaving his eternal salvation in doubt. How true it is that it is not the good beginning but the good ending of our mortal pilgrimage that is of importance!

III.

But let us follow our publican. About forty miles

from Ancyra there was a village called Malus. Theodotus, by a special disposition of Providence, arrived there just as they were about throwing into the river Halys the remains of the martyr Valens, who, after undergoing great torments, was condemned to be burned alive. He had the consolation of saving them, and putting them in a place of security. A joyful meeting awaited him not far from the same place. The saint, at great risk and expense, had succeeded in rescuing some good Christians from prison and the persecution of their relatives, who sought to deliver them up to the prefect for tumbling down the altar of Diana. When these saw their liberator they rejoiced exceedingly, affectionately saluted him, and loaded him with thanks for the favour conferred on them. The publican also rejoiced at seeing the confessors of Jesus Christ, and invited them to dine with him, that they might be stronger to pursue their journey, and for that purpose they all sat down in a picturesque spot on the bank of the river. It was a fitting place to bless God in, and recover their lost strength. Desiring that the feast should be more complete, the saint sent two messengers to invite the priest of the place to join them and bless the meats. When the messengers reached Malus they met the priest coming out of the church, after the prayer of sext or none.

When he saw their modest appearance he knew they were Christians, and addressed them and invited them into his house. He smiled, and said to himself: "Oh! Fronton" (that was his name), "how true your dreams turn out! I dreamt last night, my brethren, that I met two men completely like you, who told me they brought me a treasure. Come now, where have you it?" "Truly," they answered, "we do bring a treasure, and no ordinary one. If you wish to see it come with us, and we shall present you to the holy Theodotus, who is worth a thousand treasures; but, father, tell us where is the priest of this place?" "I am he whom you seek; but it is better that all should come to my house, for it is not

right that the faithful should remain unsheltered when there is a Christian house to cover them." Fronton then followed them, and having given Theodotus the kiss of peace, invited him and his companions to his house. "It cannot be," answered the good publican, "for I must hasten to Ancyra, where God knows what is happening to my brethren at this moment." After dining, and returning thanks, as good Christians always do, Theodotus said to the priest, with a smile: "What a beautiful place this to preserve relics in! Why not build an oratory here wherein to place them?" "Find me those venerable remains," said the priest, "and I will take charge of the rest." The publican promised that the relics should not be wanting, and exhorting him to make haste and prepare a place for them, he took the ring off his finger, and gave it to him, saying: "Take this ring as a pledge of my engagement, and may God be witness to my promise." They separated with the kiss of peace, and Fronton returned to Malus, whilst Theodotus went to succour the confessors in Ancyra.

Great events had occurred during the publican's short absence. The tempest had increased in violence, destroying in a few hours what it had taken months to build up. Among those exposed to its fury were some pious dear female friends of the saint, above all the illustrious Thecusa, who had taught him the holy fear of God and the rudiments of the Christian doctrine. She was taken prisoner with six other virgins and put in chains in the prison. The governor, finding them invincible in the profession of the Christian faith, delivered them into the hands of some young libertines to be insulted and abused in contempt of their religion and to the prejudice of their chastity, which had always been their brightest ornament. They had no arms but *prayers* and tears, which they offered to Jesus Christ, *the Author and Guardian* of their virtue; and protested *against the violence* offered to them. One of the young *debauchees*, more imprudent than the rest, laid hold of

Thecusa, the oldest of that company, and dragged her aside. Thecusa cast herself at his feet, bathed in tears, and thus expostulated with him: "My son, what designs can you have on such as we, quite worn out, as you see, with fasting, sickness, torments, and old age?" (She was upwards of seventy, and her companions not much younger.) "It is preposterous," said she, "to entertain a passion for such carcasses as ours, shortly to be cast forth to be devoured by beasts and birds of prey; for the governor refuses us burial." Then, rending her veil, she showed him her gray hairs, saying: "Pay some regard to these, who perhaps have a mother of the same age. For her sake leave us to our tears; 'tis all we desire, and do not despair of a reward from Christ on account of your forbearance." The young men were all so affected by this speech that they desisted, and joined their tears with those of the holy virgins, and withdrew.

IV.

Theotecnus, perceiving his design defeated, attacked their constancy in another way. He proposed their engaging in the service of Diana and Minerva, and officiating as priestesses to those pretended deities. The heathens of Ancyra had an annual custom of washing the images of those goddesses in a neighbouring pond; and the day for performing that ceremony happening at that time, the governor obliged them to attend the solemnity. As the idols were each to be carried thither in a pompous manner and in a separate chariot, the governor gave orders for the seven virgins to be placed in derision in other open chariots, in a standing posture, naked, and to be carried with the idols to the pond for the same purpose. They accordingly led up the procession; then came the idols, followed by a great crowd of people, and Theotecnus himself in the rear, attended by his guards.

In the meantime, Theodotus was anxious about the fate of the virgins, and finding it impossible to be o

any assistance to them in their terrible combat, he had recourse to prayer to ask the Lord to grant them victory. For this purpose he joined Polychronius, nephew of Thecusa, Theodotus the younger, son of a relative of hers, and some other Christians, in the house of a poor man named Theocaris, near the oratory of the holy patriarchs. There they fervently prayed the Lord to give strength to those heroines to die like martyrs of Catholicity. They lay prostrate in prayer from early morning till noon, at which hour Theocaris' wife came with the news that the martyrs had died in testimony of the faith, having been drowned in the pond. Theodotus went on his knees, and with his hands raised to heaven, and weeping with pleasure, exclaimed: "We give thanks to Thee, O my God, for accepting our tears and hearing our prayers." Then, turning to the messenger, he asked: "In what part did they throw them?" "In the deepest," she answered. "After trying them with a thousand promises and inducements, and seeing them scornfully reject the white garments and the crowns which the priests of Diana offered them that they might become priestesses of the infamous deities, the president ordered them to be thrown into the pond with a stone tied round their necks. This being done, they were drowned about forty feet from the bank."

On this, those valiant Christians began to concert measures to recover the venerable relics. At nightfall a young man notified to them that the pond was guarded by sentinels. Theodotus, afflicted at finding his plans frustrated, went after dark to the church of the patriarchs, but found it walled up by the pagans to prevent the Christians from praying in it. He knelt down outside for a short time, and then went to the oratory of the fathers, but found it also walled up. Here he also *prostrated* himself in prayer for some time, till hearing *noise and footsteps*, and fearing he was pursued, he *returned to the house of Theocaris*. He lay down to rest, *and had scarcely fallen asleep when the blessed Thecusa*

appeared to him and said : " Can you sleep, Theodotus, without a care for us ? Remember the maxims I taught you when a child, and how I trained you in virtue beyond the expectation of your parents. When I was alive you ever honoured and loved me as a mother, and now, when dead, do you thus forget me ? Do not allow our bodies to become the food of the fishes : go, and rescue them, for a like trial awaits you within two days. Go, then, to the pond, and beware of a traitor." On this she disappeared.

He arose, and related his vision to his companions, and as soon as it was day sent two persons to take a view of the guard, which they hoped would be drawn off on account of its being the festival of Diana, but they were mistaken. To engage the blessing of God more effectually on the undertaking, they fasted till night, and then set out. It was very dark, and neither moon nor stars appeared, which enhanced the horror of the place, it being where malefactors were executed. It was strewed with heads and the scattered remains of burnt bodies. This shocking scene would probably have made them give over the attempt at that time, had they not been encouraged by a voice which called our saint by his name, and bid him go on boldly. Upon this invitation they made the sign of the cross on their foreheads, and immediately saw before them a light in the form of a cross to the eastward. They fell on their knees, adored God with their faces turned towards that glorious phenomenon, after which they went on ; but it was so dark that they could not see one another. At the same time heavy rain fell, which made it so dirty that they could scarce keep themselves on their legs.

V.

In this difficulty they had recourse to prayer, and immediately a body of fire appeared and moved before them ; and two men clothed in shining garments *appearing to them*, were heard to say : " Theodotus, take courage, God has written thy name among the martyrs

He has sent us to receive thee: we are they whom they call the Fathers: thou wilt find near the pond Sosander in arms, and the guards are in terrible consternation at sight of him; but thou shouldst not have brought a traitor with thee." This last clause none of the company understood. The storm still continuing, the thunder, wind, and rain made the sentinels very uneasy at their post; but the apparition of a man completely armed, darting fire round him, was too terrible to allow them to keep their ground. They accordingly betook themselves to the neighbouring cottages. The way being thus cleared for our martyr and his companions, following their guide, the luminous body before mentioned, they came to the side of the pond; and the wind raged so violently that, as it drove the water to the sides of the pond, it discovered the bottom where the bodies of the virgins lay. Whereupon Theodotus and his companions drew out the bodies, laid them upon horses, and carried them to the church of the patriarchs, near which they interred them. The names of these seven martyrs were Thecusa, Alexandria, Claudia, Euphrasia, Matrona, Julitta, and Phaina.

The news of the removal of the saints' bodies was spread all over the town the next day; every Christian that appeared was put to torture about it. Theodotus, understanding that several had been taken up, was for surrendering himself and owning the fact, but the Christians would not let him follow his inclinations. Polychronius, who had assisted our saint in carrying off the bodies of the seven virgins, the better to be informed of what passed in the city, disguised himself in a peasant's dress, and went to the market-place. But he was discovered by those who knew him to be related to Thecusa, carried before the governor, examined, and being beaten by his order and threatened with death, he was weak and base enough to say that Theodotus had taken away the bodies, and discovered the place where he had concealed them. Upon which, orders were given for these

valuable relics to be taken up and burnt; and thus it appeared who was the traitor against whom they had been cautioned.

On the moment some Christians ran to the saint's shop to tell him what had occurred, and beseech him to save his precious life. "How," said the athlete, "am I to turn my back like a coward in the very hottest part of the contest? Pray to the Lord with me, not to render me unworthy of the crown He has promised me." They all kneeling down, Theodotus prayed thus:—"Most amiable Jesus, hope of the afflicted, give me strength for the trial; accept the sacrifice of my blood for all those who suffer for Thee. Console them, O Lord; calm down this fearful tempest, and let all believers serve Thee tranquilly and peacefully." On this, general weeping took place among those present, and they embraced him and gave him the kiss of peace. "Farewell," they said, "farewell, light of the Church; farewell, Theodotus. The Lord is waiting to crown thee: the angels are ready to meet thy soul. Happy thou, who thus endest thy exile! Miserable we whose end is yet doubtful! The renowned publican prepared for the combat, his heart remaining with the afflicted Christians. But God was calling him. Armed with the sign of the cross, and desiring them to give his relics to Fronton the priest, when he showed them his ring, he went out on the street. "Remember us in heaven," his friends cried after him, and then they separated.

He met other acquaintances on the way, who advised him to fly, saying: "The people accuse you of being the ringleader of the Christians and the contemner of their gods. Save yourself whilst you may, and don't leave us orphans." To which the martyr responded: "If you really love me, you should not regret my courage, but go to the magistrates and tell them Theodotus is at the door." He fearlessly entered the tribunal, and gladly examined the instruments of torture, without betraying the least sign of fear.

VI.

When taken before the governor, Theotecnus said to him: "I will look on you as free from the crimes of which you are charged, and you shall enjoy my friendship and that of the emperor, and be appointed high-priest of Apollo, if, renouncing Jesus, who was condemned to the cross by Pilate, you adore our gods. In this honourable position, to which belong the consecration of priests, the appointment of magistrates, and the election of ambassadors, you shall be respected by all, as well on account of your high dignity as your immense wealth." Though the people advised him not to throw away such an offer, he only gave this answer: "Of what value are all your honours and riches, which end with life? I seek for eternal riches and honours; and so no one can tear from my heart faith in Jesus, whom you despise as a common man, though He is the King of heaven. Look over the history of your gods, Theotecnus, Jupiter, Apollo, Mars, Vulcan, and you shall find they were adulterers and homicides, whilst, if you would not close your eyes to that of Jesus, you would discover nothing in His life but what was pure, holy, divine, and His bitterest enemies cannot find any blemish in Him. And do you want me to bow myself before the earthen or brazen statues of those infamous gods, and renounce Jesus, my God and Saviour? I say my God, for what else can He be who was foretold by the prophets from the most remote antiquity? Who teaches us a doctrine so holy, so pure, and so divine, that it surpasses all human understanding? Can a person at whose command water is converted into wine, the stormy sea becomes calm, the dead rise to life, sickness vanishes, and the elements of nature are rendered obedient: can a person who works such wonders be a common man?"

The saint was here interrupted by the shouts of the *idolators*, who on seeing the priests rend their garments, *tear their hair*, and pluck the leaves off their crowns at *what they considered blasphemy*, cried out against the

president himself for allowing such liberty. Then Theotecnus rose from his throne, and raging with fury against the holy athlete, was ready to put him on the rack with his own hands. All was tumult and excitement, in the midst of which our martyr alone was tranquil and serene awaiting his tortures. All the instruments were employed to conquer the publican's firmness; but the executioners tired of their work sooner than he of suffering for Jesus. He bore his torments as if it were another who was suffering, and he regarded his torturers with a smile and compassionate look, as if it were they who were enduring them. The governor, exasperated at the fruitlessness of his cruelty, ordered vinegar to be poured on his wounds, and that he should be roasted at a slow fire. When the martyr smelt the burning of his flesh he turned his head aside a little, which the governor, mistaking for a sign of his fainting under the torments, put him in mind that his present sufferings were all owing to his disrespect for the emperor and contempt of the gods. The martyr told him he was mistaken in imagining he was in a yielding disposition, because he turned his head aside; on the contrary, he could not help thinking that his officers did their duty carelessly, and therefore entreated him to see that his orders were better obeyed. He then bade him invent new tortures, which should all contribute to show what courage Jesus Christ inspires into such as suffer for Him; and let him know in plain terms, that while he was thus united to, and supported by his Saviour, he was an overmatch for all the powers of men. The governor, surprised and enraged at this freedom, commanded him to be struck on the jaws with a stone in order to beat out his teeth. But Theodotus told him nothing of that nature could interrupt his conversation with his God, who would hear the language of his heart and sufferings if he should be deprived of the use of *speech*. The executioners were now quite tired out with *labour*, while the martyr seemed to feel nothing; up

which he was ordered back to prison, and reserved for future punishment. As he went along, he took care to draw the eyes of the crowd on his mangled body, which he offered to their consideration as a glorious proof of the power of Jesus Christ, and the strength He gives to his servants, of what condition soever, and pointing to his wounds: "It is but reasonable," said he, "that we should offer to Him such sacrifices who was pleased to set us the example, and submit to be sacrificed for us."

VII.

At the end of five days the governor ordered Theodotus to be brought before him, and finding his courage not in the least abated, directed the executioners to stretch him a second time upon the rack, and open all his wounds. He then caused him to be taken off and laid upon the ground, strewed with red hot tiles, which put him to inexpressible torment. But finding him not to be overcome, though put upon the rack and tortured as before, he condemned him to lose his head, with strict orders that his body should be burnt to prevent its being buried by the Christians.

The holy martyr being come to the place of execution, returned thanks to Jesus Christ for His grace and support under the torments he had undergone, and for having made a choice of him for a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem; he also begged of Him to put an end to the persecution, and grant peace to His afflicted Church. Then turning to the Christians who attended him, he bade them not weep, but rather thank God for having enabled him to finish his course, and overcome the enemy, and assured them that he would employ his charity in praying for them with confidence in heaven. After this short speech he cheerfully received the fatal stroke.

The corpse was then laid upon a large funeral pyre, but *before they could set fire to it, they beheld it surrounded with such an extraordinary light that none durst approach near enough to kindle it.* This being reported to the

governor, he ordered the body to be watched by a guard he despatched thither for that purpose. This was done, and when the light disappeared they removed the remains from the pyre and covered them with grass, one of them ever remaining on guard.

Just then a countryman with whom our readers are acquainted, was on his way to the city. He was driving an ass laden with wine, which he was probably going to sell to Theodotus, and the animal lay down near the sacred relics. The soldiers ran to him, and finding he was a traveller, saluted him thus:—"Whither are you going, good man, at this late hour? Come and take up your lodging in our tent; and the meadow will supply your ass with plenty of grass. Better for you stay here than have to submit to the extortion of some inn-keeper or other." The traveller consented. They had spread their blankets on the green grass and were preparing to sup by the light of the moon. They generously invited their guest to join them, and he in turn offered them some of his wine, which they at once accepted without hesitation, and knowing from the aroma that it was generous, said to the traveller:—"What age is this wine, good man?" "Some five years, comrade." "That is the right sort of wine," said they. "Don't spare it, then," responded the owner. After taking several glasses, Methrodorus, the youngest, said: "I can never forget this treat, though I should drink of the waters of Lethe, which they say deprives one of all recollection of the past. I think this wine will make me forget the scourging I got for allowing the bodies of the Christian women to be stolen. Come, then, good guest, fill me another tumbler of it." "Look here, Methrodorus," said another of the guards named Apollonius, "take care it does not cost you dear, having under your charge the man of brass, who stole the seven women." "On the word of a good farmer, I do not understand you," said the countryman. "What women are those, and what man of brass are you talking about? I suppose you

have here some famous bronze statue, or you talk gibberish to mock me. I should have brought an interpreter with me." One of them then undertook to give the particulars of the seven martyrs, the rescue of their bodies, the seeming insensibility of Theodotus while under the sharpest torments, which was the reason of their calling him a man of brass, and the punishment they had reason to expect if they lost his body. From all they told him of the episodes of the story the guest knew that his friend Theodotus had suffered martyrdom. We say "his friend," for this venerable old man was the priest Fronton, who had come to collect the relics which the good publican had promised him.

VIII.

Fronton, rejoiced at the chance of being able to rescue the sacred remains, allowed the guards to drink to their satisfaction. They dipped so deeply in his generous wine that they soon yielded to sleep. On this Fronton immediately got up, placed the venerable relics on his ass, and putting the ring on the saint's finger, said: "Come, glorious martyr, fulfil now your promise to me;" and turning the ass loose he gave his angel guardian charge of him. Then he settled the grass as before, so that at first sight the loss should not be discovered, and lay down again till morning. At daybreak he got up, and pretended to be looking for his animal: he made noise and began to complain: "Where is my ass? Where has he gone to?" The guards, believing he was in earnest, laughed at his anxiety, and allowed him to go about his business. The ass, guided by the angel, went to the very place which Theodotus had pointed out to Fronton as suitable for the safeguard of holy relics. Several Christians of Malus, who saw the ass coming alone, went in search of the priest. The latter, *rejoiced on hearing* of the safe arrival of the holy body, *gave it honourable burial*, and afterwards built an *oratory, under the invocation* of the saintly publican.

Such is the beautiful history of the invincible Theodotus, who in the difficult position of a publican, reached heroic sanctity and gained many souls to Jesus Christ, for which the Lord glorified him on earth by working many miracles through his intercession, and making him worthy the palm of martyrdom. Though the day of his death is not known, his feast is celebrated on the 18th May.

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ST. JUSTA AND ST. RUFINA. DEALERS IN  
EARTHENWARE.

I.

GLORIOUS and according to St. Isidore, famous throughout the world was the victory obtained against the persecutors of Christianity by two fervent Spanish maidens. These were two sisters, Justa and Rufina, natives of Seville. They lived on the profits of an earthenware shop, which they kept in a street near the Guadalquivir. They were the daughters, as may be easily supposed, of poor parents. Illumined in the midst of the darkness of paganism by the light of faith, which they received in the regenerating waters, they laboured to lay up the riches which fortune cannot deprive of. Piety to God and the poor constituted the food of their souls. With the vivifying sap of the sacraments and Christian maxims, the two sisters grew up like lilies among thorns, rivals in purity and candour. Sparing and economical themselves, they had always, small as their means were, something with which to succour the poor. They clothed Jesus Christ in the naked, fed Him in the hungry, gave Him to drink in the thirsty, consoled Him in the afflicted, and in all endeavoured to make some offering to the Saviour with works of mercy. Living thus in conformity with the precepts of our immaculate religion, and attending in peace and harmony to their domestic affairs, they daily became more agreeable to the eyes of the Most High.

It happened one day they were selling their ware in the market-place that some Gentile women passed in procession in honour of their goddess Salambona. This was the name the Assyrians and Babylonians gave Venus, the mother of sensuality, whom they carried through the city on her feast day with great pomp, concourse, plaintive songs, cries and indecent dances, collecting from all for the expenses of the temple and sacrifices. They came to the two chaste virgins and asked for something for the solemnity. "We," answered the saints, "adore only the living God, and not statues of clay or gold, the representations of infamous, carnal gods, more vicious than corrupt men." At these words those fanatical women were filled with rage, and heaped abuse and insults on the two holy sisters. The fervent maidens were not annoyed at this, but rejoiced to suffer affronts for their beloved Jesus. One of the goddess' slaves, however, having dared to break all the ware which constituted the property of Justa and Rufina, they, turning their just indignation to the defence of their creed, seized the idol, and knocking it down, made a thousand pieces of it. "Now you see," said they, while trampling the fragments, "now you see whether your goddess is stronger than our fragile ware. Why would you have us, then, to humble ourselves before such brittle gods? We adore only Jesus, the omnipotent King of heaven and earth."

This unexpected attack disturbed the feast and exasperated the Gentiles against the heroines, whose punishment they loudly demanded. The news was not long in reaching the ears of Diogenianus, then President of Seville, who was indignant at the holy daring of the sisters, and ordered them to be seized and put in prison. When called before him and subjected to a rigorous examination, they boldly proclaimed themselves servants of Jesus Christ, prepared to die sooner than desert their religion or sully its doctrine. When the tyrant saw that *they boasted of their performance*, and found that

flattery and threats were equally useless, he ordered them to be subjected to torture: and whilst their virginal flesh was being torn from their bones, and their blood flowed freely from their wounds, the heroines were content and glad, for they saw the eternal crowns shining above their heads. In the meantime, the judge tried to make them become renegades, and with the hope of pardon to adore the false gods; but they sang hymns of praise to the Lord, who gave them courage for the terrible combat, making the president ashamed of his cruelty whilst wondering at the valour of the weak girls. He was deeply perplexed, and knew not how to subdue their invincible hearts. At last he ordered them to be again imprisoned, and subjected to hunger, thirst, and whatever other tortures his satellites could invent; but neither tortures, thirst, nor hunger could subdue them, or cool the love they had for Jesus.

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## II.

Some days after his duties obliged Diogenianus to go to Sierra Morena. The tyrant, anxious to make their chastisement more public, ordered that the valiant virgins should accompany him to the Sierra, and walk barefooted over the stones of the rough mountain. The desire to secure the splendid crowns which Jesus had prepared for them, gave them wings to follow the tyrant through rocks and briers, and neither the fatigue, nor their sufferings, nor the thorns which wounded their delicate feet, and drew copious blood from them, could diminish their constancy. What cannot the hope of those eternal goods which the Lord has reserved for His elect accomplish? Who would not be animated by that diadem with which the King of kings adorns the brow of those who fight valiantly till death? The president was on this occasion also vanquished and put to shame. On their return to Seville they were again put in prison, where St. Justa, worn out by hunger and suffering, went to be united to her celestial Spouse. Diogenianus,



in order to deprive the faithful of that precious treasure, ordered the sacred body to be thrown into a deep pump there was in the prison; but the Bishop of Seville, Sabinus I., with the help of God, was able to rescue it, and buried it in the cemetery which the Christians had in a suburb, now called St. Justa's Meadow.

But other contests which would add new pearls to her crown awaited Rufina. She was first thrown to a wild lion, to be torn to pieces; but the animal, laying aside his natural fierceness at sight of the saint, bowed his neck, and retired as tame as a lamb. But though respected by the wild beast she was not so by the tyrant and his officials, one of whom, drawing an axe, clove her head from her neck at one stroke, freeing her soul from the ligatures of the body, and allowing it to go, like that of her sister, to receive the double crown of virgin and martyr. Her venerable remains were burned in the amphitheatre; but the bishop collected the charred bones, and deposited them near the sacred relics of her sister, St. Justa. The martyrdom of these two holy virgins occurred, according to the ancient Breviaries of Toledo and Seville, in the beginning of Diocletian's reign, in the year 287, sometime before the edict which inaugurated the Era of Martyrs, which was a time of horrible persecution and extermination. Some writers say her death happened on the 17th of July, others on the 19th, this last opinion being the more general one. It is also unknown where her relics now rest, on account of the translations which took place in the disturbed times of the Moorish invasion. But this has not cooled the devotion of true Spaniards to these two heroines. The first Mozarabic temple erected in Toledo was consecrated under the invocation of the saint. Before that the prison in Seville, which was the scene of their torments, had been converted into an oratory, and on its site the magnanimous and immortal St. Ferdinand built a magnificent church and a convent of the Order of *Trinitarians*. The first oratory, however, appears to have

been the burial-place of St. Leander and St. Isidore, lights of the Spanish Church, and the glory of Seville and all Spain.



VENERABLE MARY NAVARRO, VIRGIN,  
SEAMSTRESS, AND WASHERWOMAN.

I.

ON the 30th of October, 1696, the funeral rites of the venerable virgin, Mary Navarro, conducted by that distinguished and apostolic man, John Baptist Miralles, of the Society of Jesus, were celebrated with great solemnity in the society's church in Valencia. From the funeral oration, preached by the learned Marcellinus Siuri, I am going to extract some heroic examples of virtue for the instruction of Christian maidens. Mary was born in Almacera, a village near Valencia, of parents sparingly endowed with the gifts of fortune, but rich in piety and virtue. With the Christian education and the good example they gave her, Mary became so attached to holy things that they might be said to form her delight from her childhood. She was docile and obedient to her elders, affable and modest in her bearing, and a bright example of virginal modesty. From her earliest years she knew how to unite the offices of Mary and Martha, prayer and labour; and in company with a good companion she began, when a little thing, to frequent the holy sacraments, and dedicate herself to works of mercy. On Sundays, instead of joining in profane amusements, the two would go to Valencia to fortify their souls with the Bread of Angels, and employ themselves in works of charity. They visited the hospital, and not only consoled the sick women, but attended them in the lowliest offices. They washed their hands, cut their nails, combed their hair; and our maiden, emulating some of the most renowned saints, sometimes applied her tongue

to their sores. During the week she was engaged in practices of piety, or at the domestic duties marked out for her by her parents; and in one and the other she sought only to please God, and become more self-denying.

To secure this precious virtue she and her companion would sometimes dress poorly when going to town, and join the beggars who went to be fed at the convent doors. At other times they would ask alms on the street, patiently bearing with insulting rebuffs, and then divide what they succeeded in collecting with the needy.

The interior mortification of the devout virgin was accompanied by exterior penance. She extremely mortified herself in drink, and even when exceedingly thirsty would abstain from water for a long time. There were times when she passed forty days, and even an entire year, without tasting more liquid than was contained in her food. She ate only one meal a day, usually consisting of a few spoonfuls of soup, sometimes embittered with the juice of aloes. With regard to sleep she did herself extraordinary violence. When fourteen or fifteen years of age she would tie her hair to a nail that she might not oversleep herself, and have more time for prayer; and the short rest she did take was on the hard ground, with some bricks for a pillow. Thus was she preparing from her youth for the hard and penitent life she afterwards led.

When she reached the fitting age her parents wished to lay on her the cross of matrimony; but the servant of God, resolved on perpetual chastity, humbly and respectfully refused to comply with their wishes. On this head she had to endure serious annoyance; but she bore all with patience and pleasure, in order to preserve unstained that virginity which later on she consecrated by vow to the Lord.

It is not known whether this was the motive of her leaving Almacera, but at any rate she went to Valencia, where she lived by her work, perhaps washing clothes. *Here she continued a penitent of Father Miralles, who was*

her director the greater part of her life. From his good counsels and fervent exhortations she conceived such a horror for all offence to God that she would have preferred to suffer the pains of hell sooner than commit one deliberate venial sin. This hatred of sin grew with her love of prayer, in which she was very distinguished. Every day, after a short repose, interrupted by frightful visions and horrible torments with which the devils afflicted her, she spent three hours in meditation. She drew the ordinary matter for her reflections from the life of Jesus, considering on different days His infancy, His private life, His public life, His passion, His glory, and His mystic life in the Blessed Sacrament. From this meditation she drew her great love of suffering, humble compassion for her own nothingness, and a greater knowledge of the divine goodness. And though the Lord sometimes submerged her in a sea of heavenly sweetness, her desire, however, and her aspiration were only to suffer for Jesus.

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## II.

When reflecting on the mysteries of the hidden life of Jesus during His infancy, the Queen of Angels often appeared to her, and put her loving Son in her arms, in order that she might hold tender colloquies and enjoy sweet embraces with the Infant Jesus. On one occasion that she held the Divine Child, she said to Him, burning with love: "O my Jesus, how much greater pleasure I should have if I had you in my heart, instead of my arms! But it is too foul and dirty: you, however, can clean it." When she said this the Divine Child entered her heart, transfixing her with divine love. From the contemplation of the torments of Jesus she drew such an ardent thirst of participating in His chalice of bitterness, that when meditating once on what occurred to Him in the house of Caiphas, she exclaimed: "Lord, if it be Thy pleasure that the devils should torment me as

Thou wast tortured by Thy executioners, their ministers, here I am, and I will willingly endure it!" She had scarcely uttered the words when she found herself, she knew not how, thrown into a deep dungeon, where the devils maltreated her for the space of two hours. Jesus Himself sometimes allowed her to share in His holy passion, now loading her with His heavy cross, now crowning her with thorns, now piercing her hands and feet with sharp nails. In these cases, though really and truly she appeared to suffer horrible tortures and shed streams of blood, she yet experienced such consolation and sweetness that she looked on herself as happy.

But where she melted in love was at the Eucharistic Table, which she approached every day. She prepared for it with three hours of prayer, some Masses, and sacramental confession. After receiving she spent a long time in thanksgiving for so sovereign a favour, and felt in a special way the presence of her Divine Guest. One of her greatest pains was to find herself prevented from eating this celestial Bread. Sometimes her confessor advised her not to go to Communion till cured of some fainting fits she suffered from. She would strictly obey and soon get entirely well. Sometimes also in her illnesses she was unable to go to the sacred banquet, and would fall into an ecstasy, in which she mysteriously received Communion, usually administered to her by St. Ignatius.

She also manifested the inflamed devotion she had for Jesus in the Holy Sacrament by the frequent and long visits she paid Him, when not prevented by her duties or illness. As her wants were few, her hours for work were proportionately shorter, and she was thus enabled to spend mornings and evenings, and sometimes whole days, in the churches where His Divine Majesty was exposed, to the great consolation of her soul on account of the extraordinary favours which the Lord communicated to her.

To the exercise of prayer she united continual mortification, without which the former is often only an illu-

sion. She often scourged herself two and three times a day, and this she would do for the purpose of overcoming temptations, particularly against the virtue of purity. Besides this, she wore a hair shirt next her skin up to the time of her death. Admirable rigour in a poor washerwoman who needed all her strength to do her work! Some days in the week she went through the exercise of the cross, loading herself with a heavy one, which she carried barefooted, and sometimes on her knees. And after going through all the stages of the passion, she would fasten herself to it till she suffered great pain and mortification in her arms and body, in order to imitate Jesus crucified.

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### III.

In all these holy excesses she acted under obedience, for which, though not obliged to it by vow, she ever professed singular-reverence, making it the rule of her conduct. We may see how punctual she was in its observance from a few instances. She was ordered by her confessor not to receive any visits from the blessed, who sometimes bestowed this favour on her, without observing certain prescriptions in order to avoid the deceits of the enemy. She observed them with such exactness that sometimes, when her beloved Jesus appeared to her in visible form, she continued sewing, or washing, or working at other things as if she saw nothing. Then the Lord would tenderly complain, and say to her: "My daughter, have you nothing to say to me?" And she would continue silent as a mute, as if she heard not, till having complied with all the orders of her confessor she could admit the consoling visit.

One day, to prove and humiliate her, her director commanded her not to go to Communion. She, burning in love for Jesus, arose and bewailed before the Lord her unworthiness which deprived her of the Bread of Angels. On this she was rapt in spirit without power to resist, and presented before Jesus surrounded by

choirs of angels and just, and she observed that our Lord had a Form in His hand which He appeared to offer to her. Then the servant of God said she had not permission to receive, and closed her lips tightly. But what can creatures do against the amorous plans of this Divine Lover? The Form disappeared from the hands of Jesus, and penetrated the heart of the devout washer-woman, burning her in divine love. Several times, when favoured by a visit from Jesus and His Blessed Mother, she left them and went to perform what her confessor had ordered her to do. Even in what she knew was probably injurious to her health, she would obey her physicians of body and soul. With scrupulous punctuality she followed the prescription of taking a light refection at supper, though it caused her the pains and anxiety of death. She took whatever medicines she was ordered, though she knew they would do her no good, or perhaps increase her suffering.

The devil, who knows well how important in the way of perfection is obedience to a spiritual director, endeavoured by all means to induce her to drop it. At times he maltreated and threatened her to keep her from her confessor. On one occasion he appeared to her transformed into an angel of light, and told her, on the part of God, to abandon her spiritual master. An interior light and the restlessness of her soul warned her of the danger, and she exclaimed, as was prescribed for her in such cases: "Jesus and Mary, Jesus and Mary, reign and triumph over accursed Lucifer and all the powers of hell!" on which the enemy disappeared. Satan had recourse to another artifice, which he often employs to disturb devout women and withdraw them from frequenting the sacraments. He tried to persuade her that her confessor despised her and attended more to the spiritual advancement of others than hers, and that she should *leave him and go to another who would take more pains with her. But as the fervent servant of God was very humble and looked on herself as unworthy of engaging*

the attention of anyone, trusting that the Lord would care for her if men neglected her, she easily shook off such suggestions. The father of darkness did not give up, but renewed the charge, endeavouring if he could not withdraw her from her confessor, at least to prevent her applying to him as often as she wished. He would disguise himself as the sacristan and tell her she might go home as her confessor was engaged for the day. But even this did not do, for she would remain, trusting to be able to sing the victory promised in the proverbs to the obedient.

The Lord purified the virtue of this servant of His with acute attacks of illness without giving her a moment's rest. She suffered from pains in her head, side, stomach, ears, chest, and innumerable other parts, all which she bore with edifying patience.

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#### IV.

And as if this were not enough the devil often came to her with a crowd of evil spirits, who corporally maltreated her in a fearful manner, and even took the form of wild beasts and birds of prey to torment her the more. For thirty long years they made her endure the sufferings of hell, such as its terrible stench, its burning fire, its freezing cold, but she bore all with unaltered patience, with a resignation above all proof, without a complaint, and only blessing the Lord who thus purified her. And yet all these torments did not satisfy her hunger for suffering.

In one of her visions our Saviour appeared to her as He did to St. Catherine of Sienna, with two crowns in His hand, one of thorns and the other of pearls and diamonds, and asked her to choose; and the heroic washerwoman, despising the precious stones, elected to be crowned with thorns in imitation of Jesus Christ. On another occasion our Blessed Lady asked her if she wished to suffer: "Mother," she answered, "I desire to die or suffer, so that the aid and assistance of the



Lord fail me not." She sometimes would exclaim in the midst of her pains: "More, my God, more yet, for little is all I endure compared to what my sins deserve." But it was not her corporal sufferings which afflicted her most, but those of the spirit, so much the more sensitive inasmuch as the soul is superior to the body.

She was all her life subject to vehement temptations, sometimes against faith, sometimes against religion. She often felt herself urged to blaspheme Jesus and Mary, or to despair of her eternal salvation: but her principal temptations were against the holy virtue of chastity, which the devil attacked in innumerable ways; and the most terrible part of all was that the Lord in these struggles left her in desolation of spirit to prove her virtue and constancy. In this is the touchstone of true sanctity. To serve the Lord when He sheds consolation and pours torrents of devotion on the heart, is the part of mercenaries rather than of true children. With what resignation our devout virgin bore these trials may be seen from what had occurred on a certain occasion. Buried in a sea of bitterness and fearfully attacked by the devil, she found herself without consolation, human or divine. Then there suddenly shone in her chamber celestial splendours, and St. Ignatius of Loyola, and St. Francis Xavier, appeared to her bearing a cup filled with heavenly nectar to soothe her pains and give her some relief. As soon as the sufferer understood the charitable intentions of her protectors, she refused the drink, saying: "I only want my God, I only want to suffer for my Jesus," and she firmly closed her mouth. Despite her efforts St. Ignatius applied the cup to her lips, and immediately, without opening her mouth, she felt it full of mystic ambrosia of sweetest fragrance, which completely cured her and prepared her to suffer more. Her anxiety to do so was soon satisfied, for at the end of an hour her ordinary pains and torments returned. Another day, in one of her raptures, our Lady *appeared to her, and showed her in one hand a cross, and*

in the other a spring of crystalline water, and invited her to drink. Though the servant of God was then suffering from a burning thirst, she embraced the cross, signifying that she desired neither alleviation nor consolation but only to suffer for her Beloved, who for all suffered and died on a cross.

And in the midst of such heroic virtues and so many graces received from heaven, she had the lowliest conception of herself, and despised herself with profound humility. She endeavoured to attain this virtue, the foundation of Christian perfection, now by continual prayer, now by constant acts of humiliation. Notwithstanding her heroic virtue, she looked on herself as unworthy to walk on the earth because she did not correspond as she should to the graces of the Lord. When her pains and torments would leave her she was filled with sadness, because, guided by her humility, she thought she had not suffered them with due patience, and hence she desired new occasions of suffering to show her amendment and to make reparation to her Divine Spouse. In her humble eyes her fervour and virginal purity disappeared, and she saw nothing in herself but defects, so that she regarded herself as the most ungrateful sinner in the world. On one occasion the Lord appeared to her in anger, threatening to punish the sins of men, and she, as if she alone were in fault and the cause of provoking the divine indignation, threw herself down in confusion and cried out: "O Lord, pardon! I will amend! Mercy, O my God! punish not the just for sinners!" Insults she bore with the most profound humility, and taking the charges made against her as true, besought God to give her the grace of amendment.

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#### V.

In order to dive deeper into this important virtue she frequently implored the patronage of her heavenly advocates, to whom she prayed with great fervour. These were, besides Jesus and Mary, St. Joseph, St.

Joachim and St. Anne, St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Francis Xavier, St. Francis, and others. She had ineffable devotion to the Blessed Virgin. She daily offered to her, with deep affection, the entire Rosary with its fifteen mysteries; she spent hours in prayer before the miraculous image of the Conception; she took great pleasure in hearing read the book of "The Mystic City of God," on account of all it contained in honour of Mary, whose name she could not hear mentioned without the joy of her heart being depicted on her countenance. For this same reason she professed extraordinary devotion to the Spouse of Mary and her blessed parents. She was specially attached to the patriarch St. Joachim, and a zealous promoter of his honour. For this purpose she distributed some verses composed in his praise by her confessor, and a little book written to spread devotion to St. Joachim and St. Anne by Father Garcia of the Society of Jesus. She regretted very much that this glorious patriarch was not better known, and that his feast was not one of obligation; to obtain which she used to say she would willingly be sold as a slave. She moved in the matter through Father Miralles, who through the influence of the Royal Family obtained, if not its declaration as a feast of observance, at least that it should be laid before His Holiness.

The affection she had for St. Ignatius and all his children was above all estimation; and she constantly asked him to admit her as a daughter, and St. Francis Xavier as a sister, and ceased not till she obtained her request. When she was one day earnestly asking this favour from Jesus and Mary, they appeared to her accompanied by the holy patriarch and the Apostle of the Indies, and our Lord told St. Ignatius to accede to her request. The saint then took out the catalogue of the Society, and wrote down in letters of gold the name of "Maria Navarro." The servant of God was delighted with this marked favour, and more so on receiving the *letter of the confraternity*, sent to her by the General of *the Society*.

A real daughter of his she was indeed, extremely zealous for the divine glory and the good of souls. As a lover of angelical purity she abhorred all immodesty in female dress, and laboured hard to save others from following objectionable fashions; and she had the consolation of hearing from the divine lips that God would at the hour of death assist with special graces all women who would not err in this matter.

She was also a daughter of St. Ignatius in the spirit of poverty with which she was adorned. She loved this virtue as she would a tender mother, and rejoiced to see herself surrounded by privations. When she could no longer work she asked to be allowed to go to the poor-house to end her days there. On one occasion an alms was sent her by a priest, but as she did not then need it they could not prevail on her to accept it. To make her consent to receive a small pension to save her from absolute want it was necessary to call in the authority of her confessor. And she was so extreme in this that when the devil tempted her by offering her a large sum of money, she was filled with profound bitterness, for she imagined when he attacked her in that way there must be some hidden affection for wealth lying dormant in her heart.

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## VI.

But the virtue which shone brightest in the devout virgin was the flower of them all—charity. Though poor and in need, she divided what she could with the poor; and when unable to otherwise help them she consoled and prayed for them. How solicitous she was to appease God, even at the cost of her ease and health, is proved by various cases. In the year 1677 public prayers were being offered in a church of Valencia on occasion of the plague. Maria was there one evening engaged at her devotions amid a thousand anxieties, pains, and temptations. At the end of her prayers she was rapt in spirit, and saw the sorrowful Virgin and her Son crowned

with thorns, and all covered with wounds. "My daughter," said the Virgin to her, "pray fervently for this unfortunate city, and try to disarm the wrath of my Son excited against it by its lusts, homicides, and profane dresses. And the charitable maiden did so, and ceased not till she obtained mercy. On another occasion, when floods were threatening the neighbourhood of Valencia, the devout dressmaker was, while at prayer, rapt again, and beheld the Queen of Heaven seated on a throne of majesty. Throwing herself at her feet, she besought her to have pity on those in danger. Our Lady answered: "Let me alone, child; human wickedness has reached its height, and God is enraged against this city for its lust, immodesty in dress, and gambling, the ruin of families." Maria answered: "I will not let you be, till you have granted me what I ask. Do, my Lady, do so for the sake of your pains, do so for the sake of what you suffered for men." Tears soften rocks, and the heart of our good Mother needed not so much to move her to compassion, and so she answered: "Very well, my daughter, I will do so, you need not fear."

On several occasions she restrained the arm of God, enraged by the sins of men. With like charity she laboured for the conversion of sinners. Besides speaking in all her conversations with them of holy things calculated to excite the fear of God, she tearfully recommended their case to the Lord. And she was not content with tears, but offered herself to endure all kinds of suffering for the good of souls. On one occasion, to prevent the loss of one, she offered to suffer in this life the pains of purgatory. God accepted the sacrifice, and from that very night, the 9th of July, to the 31st, the feast of St. Ignatius, she suffered such a fire in her lower extremities that the blood boiled in her veins, and abundantly oozed from the pores of her body.

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## VII.

*She was also much attached to the blessed souls of*

purgatory. For them she prayed continually, for them she applied her sufferings and mortifications, and offered to endure more, on condition of obtaining their eternal repose. The poor souls, knowing her generosity, sometimes came to ask her for suffrages, and were always well received. On a feast of Corpus Christi she asked our Divine Saviour to admit to glory thirty-three souls, in honour of the thirty-three years of His mortal career, and fifteen in honour of the fifteen mysteries of the Blessed Virgin. She entreated and supplicated so earnestly that the favour was granted, and the souls most devoted to the Blessed Sacrament were chosen, who had been sent to purgatory for some carelessness in preparing for Holy Communion, or in giving thanks after it. Another case, full of holy instruction, occurred on the feast of the Sacred Blood. Being ordered by her confessor to pray fervently for the blessed souls, she offered to suffer for them the torments of purgatory. On the moment her angel guardian appeared, and took her down to that scene of pain, and there she endured such sufferings that she said they were like the pains of hell. The angel showed her millions of souls buried in a sea of unutterable woe for slight defects through immoderate laughter, idle words, time lost, and other apparently insignificant faults. All sadly cried for mercy; and the charitable virgin, taking pity on them, redoubled her prayers, and had the consolation of seeing Jesus crucified pouring from His wounds streams of blood to extinguish the fire. Maria renewed her offer to suffer for them all the pains they were enduring, and having obtained her request she came up again, accompanied by her angel and an army of souls who blessed her for her charity. Those sufferings, voluntarily accepted, lasted only an hour and a half, which appeared to her like long ages. How mad we must be who, though we have it in our power, will not try to avoid these sufferings!

Some may believe that, with such beautiful dispositions, the servant of God must have had a sweet death, but

they are mistaken. Up to her last hour she had the grace of imitating Jesus Christ, who, when nailed to the cross, exclaimed: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Maria, though she knew beforehand the hour of her departure, had no consolation or joy on that account, but was, on the contrary, buried in a sea of anguish and pain. But bearing all with serenity of mind and Christian conformity, she delivered up her spirit to the Lord on the 18th of July, 1696, at the age of forty-three years.



### BLESSED HENRY DE TREVISO, PORTER.

#### I.

BETWEEN Brescia and Trent, in the mountainous part of the Tyrol, there is a beautiful village, celebrated for its charming position, and still more so as having been the cradle of a poor porter, a beggar in the last years of his life, whose glorious name is inscribed in the Book of Life among the most famous monarchs of Christendom. This was Henry, a native of Bolzano. The poverty of his parents did not allow him to cultivate his natural gifts of intellect, for he never learned to read; but this did not prevent his acquiring from his earliest years the heavenly art of forming his soul in the school of divine love, which is the great science of the Christian, for which learning is not required, or wealth, a decided will to despise all things perishing being alone necessary. Instructed in this science of the saints, Henry made considerable advancement in virtue, daily becoming more beloved by good Christians, and abhorred by the wily heretics by whom he was surrounded. At the proper age he was married to a virtuous girl, and they lived together faithful imitators of the holy family of Nazareth. Such was the lustre of his virtues, such the clearness with which he defended the Catholic doctrine without other arms than the catechism, that the heretics, unable, *like nocturnal bats, to bear the light of his arguments*

and example, made war on him without quarter. To such a pitch did their persecution reach, that having lost his spouse, and anxious to live in peace, the saint went to Treviso, the capital of a province in the States of Venice. To provide the means of living he had here to depend on the labour of his hands, sometimes running errands, sometimes as a porter, or at whatever other work he was put to by those who paid his wages. He carried his burdens like another Simon of Cyrene, who had the happiness to bear the Saviour's cross, now offering the small toil of this life to God's glory, now murmuring his prayers by the way, now meditating on the stages of the history of Jesus. If you saw him working with his usual anxiety you would have believed he only wanted to please those who employed him that he might get better pay; but Henry, with higher views, laboured thus hard because he had consecrated his toil to God, to whom all works should be directed. He felt in his heart a holy envy of those who could read, not for the sake of satisfying his curiosity, but to instruct himself in the divine teaching by means of good books. But his pure heart and zeal taught him how to supply this want.

He never lost an opportunity of hearing the Divine Word, which made the deeper impression on him, as his desire of learning was very great, and recourse to spiritual reading was closed to him. Hence he always listened with attention and pleasure to the edifying examples he heard recounted, and never went from sermon or discourse without carrying with him some good maxim to feed his soul. Retired in some corner, where he could conveniently hear, he collected the eternal truths, which fell like fertilising rain on that well-disposed heart. Besides, he went daily to Mass, which he heard with the fervour of a seraph. He had by day and night stated times for his devotions, and in the midst of his labour he frequently raised his heart to God in sweet aspirations, particularly when he saw the Lord offended by any blasphemy or sin whatever. Who would imagine that



one so poor could find anything to give to the needy ? And yet he was in this a perfect model. As he lived very sparingly, and led a very austere life, he daily gave to the poor the greater part of what he earned. He might, if humanly prudent, have saved no small amount from the fruits of his labour for his old age ; but, guided by another superior prudence, he preferred to trust himself day by day in the hands of Divine Providence, and give away the last farthing he possessed. Just and fearing God, though anxious to earn for the poor, he would never take more than he had a right to by equity and custom ; and, even when denied his due, he would never become importunate or impertinent. But virtue is ever considerate and polite.

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## II.

It is said that the child of the alms-giver had never to ask alms, for even in this life the Lord gives the hundredfold of what is distributed to His poor ; but as He is generous in giving trials to those who ask for them with a high intention, so also in the case of those who renounce a percentage in this life to secure a greater reward in glory, the good Jesus usually accepts the offer, and leaves the alms-giver in poverty. This explains how Henry, after feeding the hungry with edifying charity even with his own food, when advanced in years, and unable to work, had to ask help for the love of God. But even then he divided with the poor what remained after his own wants were supplied, never reserving a mouthful for the next day. He took up his dwelling in a garret which James de Castegnolio charitably offered him ; and there the saint led a hidden and despised life, which, however, drew down the benedictions of God on that house. And though he endeavoured to hide his good works, their extraordinary lustre was publishing his sanctity in all parts. All the poor whom he succoured with liberal hand were so many *heralds to proclaim* his charity and self-denial. His

gaiety and sweetness, ever constant and harmonised with his irreproachable conduct, revealed a heroic and holy heart. He never spoke of his own affairs either in praise or dispraise. In his misfortunes, in his attacks and afflictions he was never heard to complain. "Blessed be Jesus," he used to say in pain as well as in gladness. Injuries he repaid with kindness, insults with benedictions. When boys followed him and threw stones at him, as they sometimes do to feeble, ragged old men, the servant of God rejoiced to be able to suffer that little sacrifice for Jesus, received their treatment with a smile, and repaid it by praying to the Lord for them, and for their negligent and guilty parents. His humility and patience reached such a pitch that some thought he was devoid of feeling.

Badly dressed and barefooted, with a stick in one hand, and his beads in the other, he went the rounds of the churches to engage in prayer, visit some image, or attend the divine offices. After visiting them he would return, repeating the Rosary, to the cathedral, and there stand for long hours, hat in hand, before a statue of the Blessed Virgin in the portico. He frequently received Holy Communion with great fervour and recollection, and went to confession every day, not on account of scruples, but to preserve his soul pure from the slightest stain, and to become encircled with the grace of the holy sacrament. He was so delicate of conscience that if at any time he refreshed his senses by looking at a garden, or with the fragrance of a flower, or the song of a bird without offering it to the glory and praise of God, he would go immediately and reveal it to his confessor, and with tears bewail his imperfection. He once took a desire to eat some crabs, and having asked and obtained them as an alms, he not only did not use them, but let them rot, to punish himself for his fault in yielding to his desires.

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### III.

The Lord by wonders more than once manifested how

much He was pleased with the purity and devotion of His servant. It was raining one day in torrents, and nevertheless the saint remained in rapt contemplation of the images of the saints on the front of the church of St. John, without a drop falling on him. But what wonder that such favours should happen to one who lived more in heaven than on earth? Catherine, wife of the notary public in whose house he had his lodging, often heard him talking with people in his room whose voices she did not know, and when she would ask him who they were he could give no answer, but taking his hat and stick would leave the house. And many other wonderful things occurred which clearly proved the virtue of the servant of God.

He was now ripe for heaven, and the Lord took him on the 10th of June, 1315. His sanctity was known over the whole city; and consequently, when the news of his death spread, an immense multitude gathered to venerate his remains. Three notaries, selected by the magistrates, bore testimony that two hundred and seventy-six miracles were wrought by the Lord in his relics before they were consigned to earth. The people carried away mementoes of him, some a chip of his coffin, others a bit of his clothes, some a shred of his winding-sheet, others again a portion of the straw which had served him as a bed, and no one liked to leave without something. These are the trophies gained by virtue—relics of peace and charity much more glorious than the sword of Alexander or the Great Captain, the symbol of extermination and death. At last they gave him honourable burial. After sixty-six years his remains were examined, for the purpose of exposing them to the veneration of the public, and his body was found perfectly incorrupt, and giving out a sweet fragrance, which moved all who witnessed it to glorify the blessed Henry. Thus generous does the Lord show Himself with His *saints*, without exception of persons.

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## ST. LAZARUS, PAINTER.

## I.

IN all times has the Church endeavoured to excite the devotion of the faithful by the external brilliancy of her worship. For this purpose she lights on her altars those candles, which are the image of the flame of the charity which should burn in our breasts and consume our hearts to the glory of our God; for this she burns the blessed incense, the symbol of fervent prayer, which, like an aromatic cloud, ascends to the throne of the Most High; for this she decorates her temples with beautiful, sweet-smelling flowers, the emblem of the virtues which should adorn our souls; for this we prostrate ourselves before the images of the saints and the sacred relics they left us on earth, in memory of their heroic deeds and their victories. On the contrary, the enemies of the faith, the rotten branches lopped off from the healthy tree of Catholicity, condemn a practice so conformable to human nature, reprove as idolatrous the veneration paid to statues and the portraits of those who have gained the crown of glory, as if we Catholics honoured in such images the gold, or the stone, or the colours of which they are formed. And the worst of it is that those who thus declaim against one of the most reasonable practices of Catholicity are not ashamed to pay respectful homage to infamous prostitutes, or the busts of men who were the disgrace of humanity. Man is composed of body as well as soul, and consequently requires sensible objects to excite his piety and devotion. Hence the Church, the infallible mistress of truth, in all times anathematised the iconoclasts who would destroy everything that might remind us of the existence of a future life, in order that they might give loose rein to their passions.

In the Eastern Empire, particularly, many emperors made war on sacred images. Theophilus, a man otherwise superstitious, as soon as he took the helm of state

in his hands on the death of his father, Balbo, which occurred in 829, manifested such bitterness and cruelty against those who venerated the images of the saints that all who did not abandon the devotion—bishops and simple laymen, learned and ignorant, nobles and plebeians, and, above all, painters—were either manacled in prison and cruelly tortured, or had to fly to the mountains and hide themselves in caverns, at the risk of perishing of hunger. The wicked tyrant also ordered that no monk should appear in public, as if they were living images of mortification and humility. It is an old custom of heretics and infidels to mortally abhor religious, in whom piety, good taste, and science have ever found a firm support, and the poor the most powerful aid in their necessities.

Painters suffered most from the fury of the iconoclast, and were condemned to death if they did not spit and trample on the images of the saints. Amongst other prisoners was Lazarus, a native of Cazana, and one of the most distinguished painters of the age. In those times, so trying to the Church of the East, painting, persecuted by the fanatical emperors, had taken refuge, like the sciences, in the retirement of the cloister. There it was cultivated by our glorious saint, who had early put on the monk's hood, and was ordained priest at the fitting age. Pious artists like him never prostituted their talents by painting pictures to excite the fire of sensuality; and far from looking on such productions as works of art, condemned them as abortions of hell, immoral, and destitute of true beauty, which cannot be found in anything which departs from the real beauty, the source and root of all things beautiful—Christ Jesus. Lazarus painted many pictures which to artistic merit in design, colouring, and grace of invention, united such *an air of piety*, that at the same time that they charmed *the spectator they insensibly drew him to sentiments of Christian virtues.* Given to contemplation of the divine *mysteries, and the meditation of eternal truths, every-*

thing which served not to raise his soul to God, the supreme and incomprehensible Good, and the centre of our desires, appeared to him insipid and destitute of that beauty which satisfies the heart of man. The holy painter was also distinguished for his spirit of penance, his mercy to the poor, and his zeal for the divine glory. As an athlete of Catholicity he came to its defence, now with his brush, now with his masculine eloquence. For the courage with which he defended the divinity of Jesus Christ, true God and true man, against the followers of Nestorius, for the intrepidity and mastery with which he demonstrated the distinction of the two natures, the divine and the human, in the Redeemer against the partisans of Eutiques and Dioscorus, he had to suffer rude persecutions from those contumacious and daring heretics.

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## II.

But it was the iconoclasts who treated him with greatest cruelty. Taken prisoner by the superstitious Theophilus, they first tried to persuade him with flattery and promises to trample on the sacred images; then, when the tyrant was convinced that his infernal efforts were useless, he inflicted on him such awful torments that all believed he would succumb to them. Then the iconoclast ordered him to be set free, believing that his sufferings would be a warning to him to paint no more pictures. But as soon as he gained sufficient strength, he not only engaged in restoring the pictures erased by the heretics, but produced several new ones, to infuse courage into the afflicted Catholics. When the monarch heard this, he ordered the palms of his hands to be burned with red-hot iron. Under this torture of his innocent members Lazarus showed not the least sign of pusillanimity, till becoming insensible through the intensity of the pain, he fell lifeless to the ground. *The Lord was pleased to preserve the life of the glorious*

athlete. When the pious Empress Theodora heard that he was dying, she employed every means to rescue him from prison, and her plans succeeding, she hid him in the temple of St. John the Baptist. In that retirement, as soon as he was able to use his fingers, even before the wounds were healed, he painted a beautiful picture of the Precursor, which was long preserved and exposed to the veneration of the faithful, and through which God cured many diseases. This new kind of captivity did not last many months. The God of justice called to his account the wicked persecutor of the Catholics, and with his death restored to them the liberty of prostrating themselves before the representations of the saints.

He was succeeded by his son Michael, yet only a child, under the regency of his mother, St. Theodora, and the guardianship of Theotestus, Bardas, and his uncle Emanuel. The last, having fallen sick, was visited by the monks of Estude, in whom he had great confidence. Edified by the good sentiments of the patient, they reminded him of the Catholic doctrine about images, and gave him hopes of getting cured if he restored its splendour to public worship. He promised, and recovered his health. Faithful to his word, he communicated his designs to the other two guardians, and ceased not till he had convinced them and obtained their consent. When this step was taken, he went to the empress and made the same proposal to her. "I have always desired it," answered the saint; "but what about that crowd of senators and magistrates, the slaves of heresy; and, above all, the patriarch, more tenacious than they?" "What prevents you now," answered Emanuel, "from giving the people that day of joy, having us on your side?" The empress, who anxiously longed for that happy day, and secretly paid reverence to images, immediately sent an officer, named Constantine, to the patriarch, John Lasomonte, to intimate to him the order to re-establish Catholic worship, or leave *the see of Constantinople*. Constantine found John in

bed, and could obtain no other answer than that he would consult about it and take his choice.

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### III.

When the delegate left, the patriarch opened a vein with a lancet, and immediately the rumour spread that Theodora had tried to assassinate the bishop. The news reaching the palace before Constantine returned, Bardas on the moment sent a messenger to inquire into the case. The heretic's deceit was discovered, and John, convicted of his imposture, was driven from the church and confined in a country-house. In the meantime the zealous empress hastened on the re-establishment of the worship of holy images, and for that purpose called a council in her own palace, which was attended not only by the Catholic bishops, but by others who had favoured the heresy. This assembly not only anathematised the enemies of the images and confirmed the second council of Nice, but also elected as patriarch of Constantinople St. Methodius, who had suffered not a little in defence of Catholicity. The empress was rejoiced at the happy result of her enterprise, and implored the mediation of the bishops in favour of her deceased husband. "Fathers," she said to them, "now that I have done so much for the re-establishment of the holy images, I ask of you one favour, and it is to obtain from God pardon of the sin the emperor, my husband, committed against Catholic worship." Methodius, in the name of the whole Church, answered: "Lady, our power of absolution does not extend to the dead. We have received the keys of the kingdom of heaven to open its gates only to the living. And though it is true that we can make the deceased participators in the suffrages of the living, it is not less certain that this refers only to those who die in grace, and not to those who departed with evident signs of damnation." The empress responded that she did not think Theophilus was of the latter number, for when dying she spoke to him feelingly of the terrible conse-



quences of going before God in heresy, and had obtained from him signs of repentance, and induced him to kiss the images of the saints. After this declaration they granted to the deceased emperor the suffrages of the faithful, and the council was dissolved.

Through the prudent zeal of the empress, Catholic worship soon began to flourish again, and our holy painter contributed not a little, by his example, his preaching, and his paintings, to foment Christian piety, so depressed in the late persecution. Amongst his numerous works the picture of our Saviour, which he restored in one of the public edifices, deserves special notice. At sight of that blessed image, in which the artist so well represented the amiability and sweetness of our Divine Master, the faithful were inflamed with a love of God and a hatred of sin. The saint was one day speaking to the empress, the Maecenas of pious painters, and thanked her for her good offices in the triumph of the faith. Saddened by the recollection of her husband's excesses, she asked Lazarus to forgive him for the penalties to which he had subjected him, and pray to God for the pardon of his sins. "August lady," answered the painter, "God is not like men, that He should so easily forget what He bore on the cross for Theophilus and us all. If He pardoned us at the cost of His life how can we dare to entertain rancour against anyone?" The good lady was satisfied, and continued her favour to the artist and all interested in the re-establishment of piety. She loaded them with gifts and favours, encouraged them in their noble enterprises, and consulted them in affairs of importance. Lazarus afterwards received many evident proofs of the affection and high esteem in which he was held by Theodora and her son Michael.

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#### IV.

*Guided by the good advice of his mother, the young prince desired to renew relations with the Pope, and live*

united to the see of Peter, the infallible chair of truth. For this honourable mission they selected Lazarus, and sent him to the Court of Rome. He took with him costly presents for the vicar of Jesus Christ—crosses and chalices set with precious stones and made of purest gold, and other rich and beautiful ornaments for the altar. Thus, whilst under his prudent mother's guidance, did the prince try to indemnify the glorious painter for what he had suffered under his father, Theophilus. Would that he had persevered in her holy maxims, and not allowed himself to be seduced by the craft of infamous men! But the Lord wished to chastise that vain and fickle people, and sent them a perverse and corrupt king.

Our saint had the happiness to die before the Lord discharged on the nation the whole force of His justice. Soon after he returned from his first embassy he was sent again to Rome on another; but being now ripe for heaven, he died on the way. As soon as she heard of his death the empress, encouraged by the patriarch Methodius, sent commissioners in search of his remains, which were brought back to Constantinople, and honourably buried in the church of St. Errandus. The Lord, who had called Lazarus to feast on the beauties of heaven, honoured the memory of the holy confessor with many miracles.

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## Reading from the History of the Holy Family.

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### FROM THE MISSION OF THE APOSTLES TO THE TRANSFIGURATION.

It may be truly said that up to this the disciples did no more than accompany their Master on His excursions, without taking any active part in His labours. But now our Lord wished them to assist Him in the work of the regeneration of the world. He then called the twelve Apostles, and gave them power to cast out unclean spirits, to cure all kinds of disease, and to raise the dead to life. He told them to preach the kingdom of God through all Israel; that they should not carry silver in their purse, nor have two coats, nor two pairs of sandals, but that they should take what was offered them, for the labourer is worthy of his hire. He recommended them, first, when they arrived at any town, to seek lodging in the houses of the most virtuous citizens; and, second, in case they were refused by anyone, to shake the dust off their feet, and look for hospitality elsewhere. "I say to you," He added, "it shall be more tolerable at that day for Sodom than for that city." He wished them to be always prepared for reverses, and so, besides recommending to them the innocence of the dove and the prudence of the serpent against hidden enemies, that they might not imagine they were going to walk on a way strewn with roses, He foretold to them the storms and persecutions they should meet with at many points.

*"But fear not,"* He added, *"him who can only kill the body; but rather fear Him who can cast body and soul into hell."* And then He took leave of them in order to

prosecute His own evangelical labours. The disciples were so delighted at the successful opening of their work, and at the power they had over the sick, the dead, and those possessed, that they ran to tell their Divine Master the happy outcome of their preaching. "Rejoice not in this," said He, "that spirits are subject unto you; but rejoice in this that your names are written in heaven."

The crowds drawn by our Saviour were daily increasing, so that to obtain some rest and be free from their importunities, He was often obliged to hide in the desert. One day He crossed the sea of Tiberias to a solitary place called Bethsaida, to retire with His Apostles; but when the crowds found out the intention of Jesus, they went round by land, and were collected at the foot of the mountain to which the Lord had gone. That loving Heart could not repulse a people who sought Him with such anxiety and perseverance. He came, then, down from the mountain to receive them, spoke to them of the kingdom of God and cured their sick. And, as it was growing late, the Apostles besought the Messiah to send the people away that they might go to procure food for themselves in the neighbouring farm-houses and villages. But Jesus said: "They have no need to go: give you them to eat." And one of them answered: "We have not here but five loaves and two fishes." And the number of people, without counting women and children, was about five thousand. Jesus commanded the people to sit down in groups of fifty, and taking the loaves and the fishes, He raised His eyes to heaven, and blessed them and gave them to His disciples to distribute. All the people ate and were satisfied; and when the fragments that still remained were gathered, they filled twelve baskets. The people, in gratitude for this extraordinary favour, wished to proclaim Him their king; but He, after making His disciples embark for the opposite shore, went up into the mountain alone to pray. *The disciples were sailing tranquilly across, when suddenly a great storm arose, and the wind was again*

them. They were busy at their labours, when they saw something in the distance coming towards them on the waters. They examined it attentively, and were soon convinced it had a human form, and was coming towards them with the design of passing by them. And when it was now near, they were greatly afraid, and began to cry out. Jesus then said to them: "It is I, fear ye not." Then Peter, relieved from his fears, said: "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come to Thee upon the waters." And Jesus answered: "Come." And Peter, jumping out of the boat was going to Jesus walking on the waters. But after a little he was struck by a wave, and staggering he began to fear and was sinking, when he cried out: "Lord, save me." Jesus immediately caught him by the hand, and said: "Oh, thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?" Then they both got into the boat, and the wind ceased. The whole crew received Him with astonishment, and confessed that He was the Son of God. With the divine pilot on board, now they feared not the storm, and soon they reached land in safety.

The crowds had not seen the Messiah enter the bark, and believing that He was still in the desert of Bethsaida, they anxiously sought Him in order to proclaim Him King of Israel. But when told by some passengers, who had arrived by sea from Tiberias, that He had disembarked on the opposite shore, thither they went in search of Him. But in the meantime He had gone to Capharnaum, and after Him went they also, and having found Him, they asked how He had got there. "Amen, amen, I say to you," He answered, "you seek me, not because you have seen miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting, which the Son of Man will give you. For him hath God the Father, sealed." They answered: "What shall we do that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered: "This is the work of God, that you *believe in Him whom He hath sent,*" And they replied:

"What sign therefore dost Thou show that we may see, and may believe Thee? What dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert;" and for that they believed in Moses. Then Jesus said: "Amen, amen, I say to you: Moses gave you not bread from heaven, but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world." Then they cried out: "Lord, give us always this bread." And Jesus answered: "I am the bread of life. He that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst." Ah! yes, how could they suffer hunger or thirst who in the love of God find all things good? However, the blind material Jews were horrified at hearing Jesus say that He was the bread of heaven, erroneously thinking that He should be eaten and ground by the teeth like ordinary bread. Jesus insists on what He had said: "I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead." For the manna only fed the corruptible body, destined to become the food of worms; but the body of Jesus, when worthily received, is the life of the soul, and for the body a germ of final resurrection. Jesus wishes us to seek the life of grace, which makes us participators in the divine nature, and gives us a claim to a happy immortality; and this life is communicated to us in the Holy Eucharist, by which Jesus mysteriously lives in us and we in Jesus. Let the Jews murmur as they might the Lord continued to speak of the sacrament of Communion, which He was to institute at the Last Supper, and said: "Amen, amen, I say to you: Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you . . . For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." This is a meat which is not broken by the teeth, but is consumed in an ineffable manner under the sacramental species, with the spirit of faith in our Lord's presence. When they heard these expressions of Jesus, who employed them to prepare them to

the institution of the Holy Eucharist, several of His disciples not only joined in the murmurs of the Jews, but, scandalised at His words, even abandoned Him. Then Jesus, turning to the remaining disciples, asked : "Will you also go away?" And Peter answered : "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have known that Thou art the Christ the Son of God." Jesus was pleased with this answer, but yet He said that all did not entertain the same sentiments, for Judas, who was to betray Him, was among them.

The feast of the Pasch was now approaching, as St. John insinuates when relating the multiplication of the loaves, and Jesus prepared to depart to Jerusalem to celebrate it. We know of nothing particular that happened at it, for the Evangelists observe complete silence on the point, and we are only aware that it was the third which Jesus celebrated since His baptism, and so we will pass on to speak of other edifying events. When our Saviour was once on the way to Tyre and Sidon, a Canaanean or Phœnician woman met Him, and began to cry out, and beseech Him to cast forth the devil out of her daughter. But He went on his way as if He had not heard her. But she continued to entreat Him, and the disciples asked Him to dismiss her. He, however, refused her prayer, as He was sent to collect the scattered sheep of the house of Israel. Not, therefore, did the woman cease, but casting herself at His feet, poured out her supplications. The Lord answered : "It is not good to take the bread of the children, and cast it to the dogs." But she replied : "Yea, Lord ; for the whelps also eat under the table of the crumbs of the children." Then He said to her : "For this saying go thy way, the devil is gone out of thy daughter." And the girl was cured from that moment. Jesus pursued the road of Sidon, and going up to the springs of the Jordan on the other side of the sea of Tiberias, not far from *Decapolis*, He restored speech to a deaf mute. He

afterwards went up to the mountain, and remained there three days, probably in prayer, as was His custom.

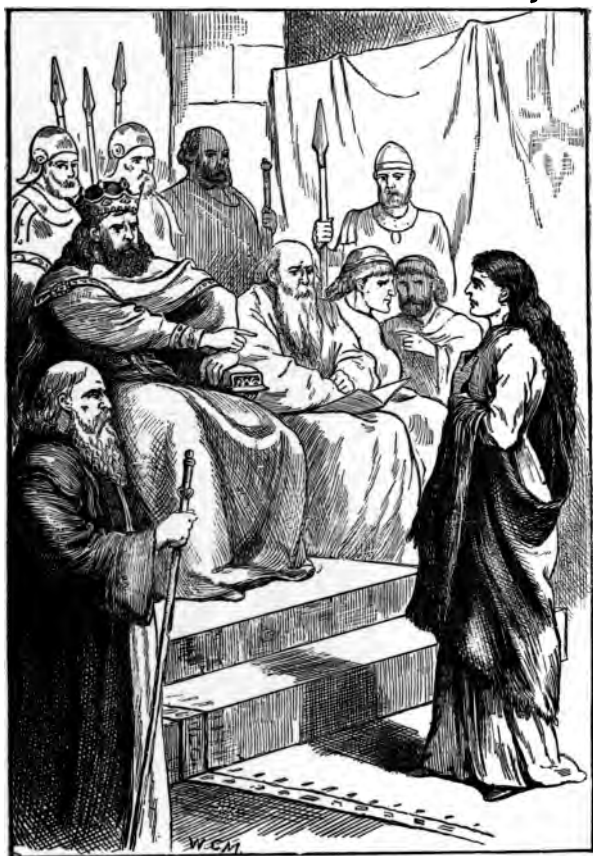
When He came down a whole troop of sick people—blind and dumb, lame and paralysed, and persons suffering from all kinds of diseases—met Him, and He cured them all. Then, surrounded by about four thousand men, without counting women and children, He first distributed among them the bread of the Divine Word, and afterwards that they might not go away hungry, repeated the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves; and the remains filled seven baskets. Let us leave Him for a short time on the way to Magedan, in the district of Dalmata, near the source of the Jordan, and listen to His words of life. After this journey some Pharisees, vainly curious, asked Him, as on other occasions, for new prodigies. He with His usual amiability, gave them the same answer as before, about His future resurrection, symbolised in the case of Jonas, telling them at the same time that as people skilled in the inspection of the sky could know coming good or bad weather, so also, and with greater certainty, by a faithful examination of the Scriptures, they should know that many of the signs foretold by the prophets as indicating the coming of the Messiah, expected so long, had already appeared.

Another more important scene occurred soon after. After crossing the sea of Tiberias and returning to Bethsaida, where He cured a blind man, He passed over to Cæsarea Philippi, where His disciples awaited Him. When He stood in their midst like a loving Father, He asked them: "Whom do men say that I am?" They answered that some said He was John the Baptist, whom Herod had beheaded to please an infamous dancing girl; others asserted that He was Elias; and others, again, held that He was one of the prophets. "But whom do you say that I am?" And Peter answered: "Thou art the Christ." "Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jonah, for neither flesh nor blood has revealed it to thee,



but my father who is in heaven. And I say to thee, thou art Peter (that is, a rock) and on this rock I shall build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." This is a consoling promise for us Catholics, on which rests not only our unwavering faith in the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff, but also our firm hope that in spite of the terrible tempests, which the wicked of earth, the abortion of hell, raise against the bark of Peter, it will always sail secure, invisibly guided by the heavenly Pilot. "And I will give thee," He added, "the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatsoever thou loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven, and whatsoever thou bind on earth shall be bound in heaven." This is a grand and magnificent promise, by which Peter and after him the Chief Pontiffs were to possess supreme power over the Church, over subjects and prelates, and over all that appertains to the government and administration of the house and treasures of Jesus Christ. When He heard the admirable confession of Peter, Jesus ordered His disciples not to discover to anyone that He was the promised Messiah, foretelling them at the same time the injuries, torments, and death which the Scribes would inflict on Him, and the glorious resurrection with which, on the third day after His crucifixion, He should triumph over death. When Peter heard of the affronts to which Jesus was to be subjected, he manifested a considerable amount of feeling and desires to prevent them, and was somewhat bitterly rebuked by our Saviour, who then turned to His disciples and the multitude and said: "If any man will follow me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. . . What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For he that shall be ashamed of me and of my words. . . the Son of Man also will be ashamed of him, when he shall come in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." With these ideas He wished to animate *them to carry the cross*, which is and always has been *the patrimony of the just*.





ST. AFRA.

# LIGHT FROM THE LOWLY.

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## Series VIII.

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ST. ALEXANDER, MAKER OF CHARCOAL.

### I.

THE discipline of the Church with regard to the election of bishops has varied according to the necessities and customs of nations. In the first eight centuries of Christianity, when there existed among the faithful greater concord, sincerity, and zeal for the good of others than in our days, so divided by party strife, public and private, the prelates were elected by the clergy and people. The circumstances then required this, as well to secure the election of the most fitting, as to prevent the intrusion of some wolf in sheep's clothing, and also to assure their willing reception by the people. But the vote of the electors was not of equal value and weight. The people proposed the candidates, and asked that they should be promoted, appearing as witness of and security for their good morals; then came the clergy, who examined the person proposed,

and accepted or excluded him, and ordered a new election; afterwards came the provincial synod, which ratified or condemned the judgment of one and the other; and lastly the metropolitan, accompanied by two or three bishops, consecrated whoever had been canonically chosen. This form of election, though pretty common, was not universally observed, and would be impracticable in our times, as it would give rise to great inconvenience and disturbance.

After these indications no one will wonder that an humble charcoal maker should be raised from the smoke of the furnace to the brilliant glory of the episcopacy. This happened in the case of the celebrated St. Alexander, whose election was in a certain way portentous. In the short interval of peace enjoyed by the Christians under the rule of Philipos Arabe, numerous Gentiles renounced their false gods, and embraced the ignominy of the cross. This particularly occurred around Neocæsarea of Pontus, where few were able to resist the eloquence, erudition, and ardent zeal of St. Gregory, called Thaumaturgus on account of his miracles. His fame having reached Comana, the inhabitants became anxious to participate in the benefits of a religion which worked such prodigies, and sent commissioners to invite him to visit them, and, after preaching the Gospel, to give them a prelate to rule them. The indefatigable minister of Christ did not delay, but went at once to the city, where he captivated the esteem and good-will of all. This was in the year 248. Having by his preaching considerably increased the number of believers, he determined on the election of a bishop. All the leading people of the town began to look out for a man worthy of the high office. Opinions were various, some desiring that the elected should unite birth to personal qualities, and others holding a different view. The world has been always so. St. Gregory, seeing the wrong desires

of the majority, addressed them, and told them they should not look to the worldly position or the family descent of the candidates, but simply to their humility and virtues: for not rarely does it happen that those who are most contemptible in the eyes of the world are in reality most pleasing in the sight of God.

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## II.

To this discourse of the saint one of the principal men in the assembly answered, with a sardonic smile:—"If you reject men illustrious for their birth and riches, and will select the dregs of the population to rule the church of this diocese, there is no use in losing time or words; we will unanimously give our vote to Alexander the charcoal maker." We might here say with the Scripture, that he prophesied without knowing what he said; for, although a loud laugh followed his words, St. Gregory, seeing the finger of God in it, asked: "And who is this Alexander whom you refer to." One of the bystanders went in search of the charcoal maker, and brought him to the assembly, which received him with laughter. But the saint, accustomed to bear other humiliations and insults for love of Jesus Christ, paid no attention. He was dirty and ragged, his begrimed skin in several places appearing through the rents in his clothes; his horny hands and black face told the electors the candidate's trade.

Despite all these appearances, St. Gregory, with the eye of a prophet, discovered beneath the charcoal crust a valuable diamond, worthy to be inserted in the Church's

crown. And in reality, under the cloak of poverty and toil was hidden a great soul, which, in order to avoid the dangers of the world, had exchanged the philosopher's mantle for the rags of a charcoal maker. In the flower of his youth, endowed with singular beauty and personal attractions, he found his innocence exposed to constant struggles, and the jewel of chastity in danger of being lost amid the snares laid for it by hell. "The charcoal dust," he said to himself, "will soil my body, and my blackened face will not excite curiosity or lust." Hence he chose the trade of charcoal maker as most suited to the sanctification of his soul, and from it he drew celestial wisdom. The ease with which his hatchet cut down the mighty oak taught him the frailty of the goods of this life, how lasting soever they may appear. Death seizes on youth, which seemed to defy him, the same as on old age undermined by years. The change the most precious trees suffered from the fire of the furnace represented to him the transformation wrought in man by sin. He is turned by it into a monster blacker than charcoal, and fit only to burn in inextinguishable flames.

When he who so excited the laughter of all was called aside and questioned by the Thaumaturgus, in the name of God, he had to admit who he was and the motives which induced him to hide himself. This discovery filled St. Gregory with ineffable consolation, and he ordered his attendants to wash Alexander and put decent clothes on him. In the meantime, the metropolitan addressed the people, and told them how necessary virtue was to the dignity of the priesthood; and whilst he was speaking they brought Alexander to him, now perfectly clean, and looking his former self in his new garments. "Wonder not," said St. Gregory, on noticing the surprise of his hearers, "wonder not, my brethren; appearances not seldom deceive, and the devil takes

particular pains to obscure the merit of those who are to declare war on him, and drive him out of the souls who groan under his tyranny." Then the holy prelate ordered the elected one to address the people, and he did it so effectually that their smiles were turned into tears, and with one voice they cried out in praise of their future bishop, not only on account of the sublimity of his teaching, but also his ease and clearness in expressing himself. There was one, however, who mocked at the simplicity of the new pastor's language and the praises bestowed on him by the people; but the Lord corrected his bad taste by presenting Alexander before them surrounded by a flock of white pigeons, which indicated the sweetness of the charcoal maker's solid eloquence. The after facts exceeded the hopes raised in his people by his first discourse. When consecrated bishop, he made himself beloved by his flock by his untiring zeal and the solicitude and charity with which he laboured for the salvation of his people, without distinction of person or class; and, in the end, the Lord was pleased to crown his apostolic toils with martyrdom. During the terrible persecution of Decius, though he could have saved his life by flight, as many advised him, he preferred to remain with his flock and take all risks. He was cast into the flames in defence of our holy religion, and his soul flew to heaven with the garland of triumph. The year of his death is unknown, but is believed to be 253. The Roman martyrology makes commemoration of him on the 11th of August.





## ST. EUGENE, MILLER.

## I.

IN ancient times it was slaves who followed the trade of miller, not because there is any infamous mark attached to it, for, after the farmer, the miller should hold the first place, but because, as the stones were then turned by hand, it was only those condemned to slavery who were dedicated to this painful toil; and hence it was that our glorious saint became a miller, for he was reduced to slavery twice. He was a native of the province of Leinster, in Ireland, and was the son of noble parents. When yet a child he was taken prisoner with others by English pirates, and carried off to England. The Catholic religion has ever been the mother of the afflicted and the humaniser of nations. Through the influence of its maxims our saint was received by the venerable Nenius, and educated in secular and Christian knowledge in his monastery. Our youth lived here in peace, given up to the divine service and the ministry of the Church, when Welsh pirates invaded the district and seized on everything they could lay hands on, both property and persons, among them our saint, whom they carried off to Armorica.

They were made the slaves of the tyrant king of the country, who put them to grind corn. At this labour our miller passed his life, and blessed the hand of the Lord, who afflicted him in his captivity. The thought

that there is no evil which does not come for good, that is, that the Lord will turn our ills to the good of our souls, if we correspond to His beneficent designs, filled his heart with consolation, and animated him to submit to his hard fate as imposed on him by the Father of mercies. He was obedient, humble, submissive, and docile to the orders of his overseers; he practised as far as he could the exercises of piety which he had learned in the monastery, and knew how to raise his heart from his work to the King of glory. St. Ignatius of Antioch, when going to Rome to suffer death for Jesus, wrote to the faithful of the capital of Catholicity:—"I beseech you that you show not an unseasonable good-will towards me. Suffer me to be the food of wild beasts, whereby I may attain unto God. I am the wheat of God, and I am to be ground by the teeth of wild beasts, that I may be found the pure bread of Christ." Thus, I am sure, our captive would exclaim too. Here I am, my God; grind me with pains and toil; grind me on the tree of the cross, that I may become in thy eyes a propitiatory host. At least, he endeavoured to foment such sentiments by a patience above all proof, and an invincible constancy in the divine service. And although he and his companions in misfortune laboured diligently at the tasks imposed on them; yet, not satisfied with sanctifying them with prayer, and satisfied of the injustice of their captivity, they had no hesitation in stealing some time for spiritual reading, and so animating themselves to bear with resignation the severe toil of the mill. They were caught one day at this pious occupation by the overseer, and ordered to go at once to their work. As soon as he turned his back they all knelt down and poured out fervent prayers to the God of goodness, beseeching Him to grant them some relief in their sufferings and rest in their toil, that they might feed their souls with prayer and pious reading. They

had scarcely concluded when some angels in the form of lovely youths came to take their place at their work whilst they spent their time at their devotions. Encouraged by these pleasing visits, it is impossible to say how joyfully they suffered for Jesus, and how generously they corresponded to the divine inspirations.

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## II.


God was now satisfied with the sacrifice they had made to Him of their liberty, a sacrifice all the more agreeable in His divine eyes, inasmuch as, on account of his barbarity and disorders, the tyrant seemed unworthy to exercise any authority over the servants of Jesus Christ. The hour of their rescue was now at hand : in fact the king himself, aware of the extraordinary graces they received, and touched by their edifying example, gave them complete liberty to return to their monastery. As our saint before recognised the hand of the Lord in his misfortune, so now in his prosperity he ceased not to bless Him for so unexpected a favour, and he joyfully returned to his beloved retirement. Monasteries at that time were nurseries of bishops, who were ordained without fixed jurisdiction or see, and sent to preach the Gospel wherever they were needed. Nearly all our captives were on their return consecrated bishops, and went to found religious houses in the province of Leinster. To our Eugene's lot fell the eastern side, called Qualand, where, having built a convent, he stimulated his subjects by his exhortations and example of all

virtues to daily progress in perfection. His house appeared like a heaven ; all had the same desires and one sole will ; all were influenced by the same affections of abnegation and piety ; in all peace and discipline were conspicuous. Whilst thus occupied in promoting virtue among his religious, and sowing the seed of evangelical civilisation in the neighbourhood, our Lord revealed to him that he must go to preach the divine word in the northern part of Ireland. It was hard for him to leave the children who loved him so much, and knew so well how to avail themselves of his wise teaching ; but to him the divine will was before all, and so he immediately prepared to go whither God called him. His disciples, afflicted and weeping over the loss of such a master, reminded him of their orphanage, and said : " What shall become of us, beloved father ? Who will console us in our afflictions ? Who encourage us in our good resolves ? " Eugene comforted them with his usual sweetness, and exhorted them to ever live in harmony like good brethren, and promising that, though absent in body, he should be with them in spirit, he gave them his blessing and left.

The saint joyfully went to plant the faith in those parts. The harvest was abundant. He founded the monastery of Ardfrath to perpetuate the cultivators of that vineyard, and, with his zeal and paternal solicitude, infused into the inhabitants a fervour equal to what he had communicated to those of Qualand. In his apostolic excursions, to the great consolation of his soul, he met one of his companions in misfortune, Bishop Tigernach, whom he joined on several occasions to mutually inflame their zeal for the divine glory. The Lord blessed the efforts of our working saint, and confirmed with miracles the doctrine he preached. Having heard on an occasion that an impious tyrant, named Amalgid, was about to stain his lance with the blood of innocent

victims, in order to offer it in sacrifice to his false gods, the charitable pastor ran to implore the sanguinary chief to desist from a crime so horrible ; but his tears, and his promises, and his threats of God's vengeance were all in vain. The human blood was offered by the barbarous priests. But the impious chieftain paid dearly for his brutality : on the third day after the sacrilegious homicides he died by his own lance, as Eugene had foretold to him.

The saint was untiring in the cultivation of the vineyard over which the Lord had placed him. In all directions the zeal of his exhortations and the odour of his heroic virtues made piety, mortification, and fervour flourish. His religious were a lively reflex of the charity, abnegation, and love of assiduous prayer which distinguished their tender father. At last came the hour of leaving this exile and being united to God for ever, which he had so often longed for. Falling grievously ill, surrounded by his monks, he received the last sacraments with great edification, and, laden with trophies and merits, he flew to his Creator, leaving to his children an imperishable example of the observant and zealous monk, and a certain pledge that he should be their powerful advocate in heaven in all their necessities. This saint lived in the middle of the fifth century, according to the Bollandists.



## ST. CASSIAN, SCHOOLMASTER.

## I.

IN all times the education of children has been a work of extreme patience, and a real martyrdom of charity when undertaken for love of Jesus Christ, with the object of planting in that uncultivated ground the seed of Christian virtues. But the glory of a good master exceeds that of the parents, high though it be, as much as the soul is superior to the body, the spirit to matter; for if the parents gave children existence and thus brought new plants on the earth, yet without proper cultivation they would only have filled the land with useless herbs unsuited to the attainment of the lofty designs of the Creator. And this cultivation, in a great measure, depends on the labour of the good schoolmaster. What, then, shall be his merit when, despite the opposition of those who should co-operate with him, he perseveres in the struggle without yielding an inch? Such is the position of a teacher when the children's parents, far from helping him to germinate the seed of virtue in their tender hearts, suffocate it by bad example and perverse doctrines and maxims, and promote the growth of briars and thistles, which in a short time will embitter their own old age and send them prematurely to the grave. In such cases the master can scarcely save one or another plant and bring it to perfection, and with regard to the others, he can only bewail his efforts

rendered useless by the negligence of those who should aid him. This happened in the case of our glorious martyr, a distinguished schoolmaster in the town of Imola, in Italy. His great care, as well as his ability, especially in writing, attracted a large number of children to his school. Cassian spared no pains on them, but all his toil was rendered sterile by the corruption of morals which reigned in the families of the place. Living in the midst of a Gentile and degraded people, no matter how he laboured to infuse into the minds of his scholars maxims of piety and sentiments of virtue, he saw all his efforts rendered abortive by the majority of the parents. To become convinced of what the bad education of those times must have been, it is enough to quote the words of Quintillian, who was himself a pagan, and a teacher of the youth of the Roman nobility: "Would to God," he says, "that we ourselves would not destroy the morals of our children! We debilitate childhood with luxury: that soft and refined rearing, which we call indulgence or tender love, cuts down and enervates the power of soul and body. What will not one desire, when he grows up, who before he could walk was dressed in scarlet? The child who cannot lisp knows what gold is, what jewels are, and looks for adornments. We instruct the palate in the matter of tastes before we teach the tongue to speak. They grow up in perambulators and coaches, and if they put their foot on the ground we support them on both sides with our arms. If they utter a lascivious word we laugh at it, and kiss them for saying it. And no wonder children say indecent things, for we teach them to do so, and they hear them from us and our daughters. The banquet-hall resounds with improper songs, and we see in it things so foul that they cannot be repeated. And from seeing and hearing comes the bad habit; from the bad habit the perverse nature, and so children learn vices before

they know what they are." Thus did Quintillian express himself, and one would think he was describing the education given in our own half-paganised cities. From such elements what good could our zealous schoolmaster draw.

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## II.

The love of order and discipline appeared to the children unmeasured severity; charitable advice and reproof, anger or injustice: innocent chastisement, cruelty and intolerable vengeance. Hence instead of exciting in their hearts the flame of emulation, they became enslaved to carelessness and idleness; and instead of entertaining gratitude for him who laboured for their good and advancement, they secretly nursed rancour and hatred. But the invincible apostle of innocence did not on this account grow disheartened. Looking only to God, from whom he hoped for his eternal reward, he ceased not to make his school shine with the light of truth, and to repeat the maxims of the Gospel, which alone can make individuals and society truly happy. This was his duty as master, and, fully persuaded of it, he was resolved to go on in spite of all obstacles.

At that time a furious tempest burst on the Church, a tempest which scattered the few sheep that escaped from its thunderbolts. This occurred in the time of Decius or Valerian, according to some, and according to others in the time of Julian. Our distinguished schoolmaster, being a disciple of Jesus, was taken prisoner before the governor of the province. Having steadfastly




refused to offer sacrifice to idols, he was condemned to death. They were debating what kind of death he should suffer, and it occurred to one of the counsellors that he should be placed in the hands of his pupils, that they might torment him as they liked. This was agreed to, and calling together the scholars, they said to them: "Here you have the master from whose hands you received so many stripes: pay them back now at one stroke. Cut, wound, scratch this hard-hearted rascal. Do not listen to his cries, for he did not attend to yours. We place him in your hands, and let us see that you redden them with the blood of your persecutor." "What better sport," said the tyrants, "can we give the people than such a spectacle?"

The proposal delighted the undisciplined troop in whose hands the poor master was put quite naked, with his arms tied behind his back. The children were armed, some with tablets of lead, some with waxed tablets of wood, and all with sharp styles, or iron writing pencils and among them there were not wanting even keen knives. Excited by the impious Gentiles to murder their master, on the moment tablets and stones flew through the air and struck Cassian, covering him with blood and wounds. When tired of this they began to use their styles and knives. Some threw them at him like darts, others buried them in his flesh without losing hold of them; these made cuts in his body, those pierced his entrails: two hundred hands fell at once on that innocent body, riddling it with wounds. The blood flowed in streams, and these young tigers seemed to gain new strength at sight of it. Their puny strokes only prolonged his sufferings; they attempted his life without taking it, they put death before him without giving it to him, and those who drove their styles more deeply into the innocent victim were the less inhuman the more they appeared so. "Strike, my chil-

dren," exclaimed the martyr, anxious to give his life for Jesus Christ, "strike your best; prolong not your crime by drawing out my life. Let your cruelty give you the strength which nature denied you." And his torments increased as his executioners grew tired. Some gave up through fatigue, and others came to their relief to avenge the imaginary injustice they had suffered. One of the bigger ones, in mocking, said to Cassian: "What can you complain of, my dear master? Was it not you put these styles in our hands? Did you not show us how to form the letters? How you did toil in the business! Well, now, tell me if this is not well written." And with his style he wrote his task on the bleeding body. This induced others also to indulge in mockery whilst inflicting their torments. "Did you not tell us," said another, "to write something every day? Well, now, see what a nice hand this is." "Now you see," said a third, "whether we abhor idleness, which you reproved so much. You surely cannot complain of us to-day." "We want no vacation," shouted a number; "we must all write our copies without fail." "Master," exclaimed others, "look at that page, there is not a comma or point wanting. Correct it if it does not please you: if it is not well written, and the lines properly drawn, where are your cane and your lash?" Thus did these ill-reared children, brought up in the lap of luxury, cruelly wound and torment their zealous master, thus did they repay his anxiety and care.

At last it pleased God to untie that great soul from the bonds of the body, which fell lifeless in the pool of blood formed by his wounds. Venomous wasps do not attack more furiously the meek lamb which might unwarily step on their nest than those young wild beasts did the eminent Cassian. After his martyrdom the Christians collected the relics of the glorious confessor, and gave them honourable burial, with the view

of afterwards enshrining them in a rich mausoleum. St. Prudentius tells us that on his way to Rome he visited the sepulchre of the holy martyr, and that, prostrated before his relics, he implored, with many tears, the pardon of his sins through his holy intercession. He speaks of a beautiful picture representing this terrible martyrdom, and exhorts the faithful to recommend themselves to the glorious athlete, who benignly attends to those who invoke him in their necessities.



## ST. LYDIA, DYER.

### I.

THE Acts of the Apostles tell us of the conversion to Catholicity of a glorious matron, inscribed by the Church in the catalogue of saints. She was a native of Thyatira, and was by trade a dyer of purple, a business at that time in the hands of well-to-do people. When St. Paul went to Philippi, in Macedonia, where Lydia had her shop, being anxious to preach there the doctrine of Jesus Christ, he went one Sabbath to the oratory where the adorers of the true God were accustomed to congregate, situated on the river bank, and explained the mysteries of our holy religion. Among other devout women our dyer was there, worshipping and adoring the King of Heaven. From this circumstance, noticed by St. Luke, we see that though probably she was the

child of Gentile parents, she had already renounced the worship of idols and become a Jewish proselyte, and a professor of that religion which before the coming of the Messias was the only true one; and she tried to serve God according to her lights in the business of dyer, or trader in purple.

Possessing a heart docile to the calls of divine grace, and illuminated by the preaching of the Apostle about the coming of Jesus Christ, she would not defer a moment the affair of eternal life, after finding it was impossible to attain it outside the Catholic religion. Abandoning the Old Law, Lydia was the first of the inhabitants of Philippi to embrace Christianity, and the first together with all her house baptised by the Apostle himself. After her baptism she invited St. Paul to lodge in her house, saying: "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there." She insisted so much that the apostle and his companions were obliged to accept the offer. They remained here many days, and would have stayed longer with that holy family, if the apostle had not freed a young girl from an evil spirit. When going to the synagogue to instruct his converts and to gain others, the envoy of God was met almost daily by a girl having a pythonical spirit, who on seeing Paul and his companions pass, would cry out: "These men are the servants of the most high God, who preach unto you the way of salvation." The apostle at last grew tired of her cries, and turning to her said: "I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to go out from her;" and the spirit left her on the moment. The girl's masters, seeing their hopes of gain through her divinations gone, determined to be avenged, and ceased not till they had them put in prison, where they converted the gaoler's whole family. We may be sure our devout dyer attended to Paul in prison, and endeavoured by every means in her power to alleviate

the sufferings of him by whom she had been regenerated in Jesus Christ. With what solicitude, kindness, and sweetness she treated St. Paul and her other guests may be gathered from the affection manifested for her by the Apostle of the Gentiles. They had released him from prison, expressly commanding him to depart immediately from the city; but the saint refused to leave without bidding good-bye to the hospitable Lydia.

In her house were gathered together all the Christians and neophytes whom the Apostle during his stay in Philippi had enlisted under the banner of Jesus. Thither went Paul; and after consoling all, as he knew how to do it, and giving them some rules and instructions to persevere in the faith, he took his leave after giving them his apostolic blessing. This is all we can say of this glorious woman, taken from the book of the Acts of the Apostles. The year of her happy death is unknown; but as St. Paul in his Epistle to the Philippians does not salute his pious hostess, which he would undoubtedly have done if she had not died, it is believed that she did not long survive the departure of the indefatigable Apostle. We may consequently hold that between the years fifty-two and sixty-one of Christ our dyer went to enjoy God in eternal blessedness, leaving us all an example of the promptitude with which we should correspond to the divine inspirations, if we are not to lose the time given us to work out our eternal salvation.

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## VENERABLE MARY OF THE HOLY SACRAMENT, DRESSMAKER, PEDDLER, AND HOUSEKEEPER.

## I.

I AM going to relate the principal events of the life of this second Magdalen, as an example to women truly penitent, and a warning to those who run the risk of losing their souls. Mary was a native of Segovia: her parents were Joseph Quintana and Clara Blanes. She was born on the 24th of October, 1684, and received a Christian and careful education, notwithstanding the poverty of her parents. She was yet very young when her father died. After his death Clara, finding her means of living cut off in Segovia, removed her residence to a village near Madrid. Here she was well received by the better classes, and found herself relieved from her former straits. Mother and daughter were fond of work, and having plenty to do, their life ran smoothly enough. Mary had scarcely reached the age to marry, when she was sought after by a young farmer, the son of a decent couple in the village. Our prudent seamstress declined the offer, foreseeing the disagreeable consequences it should entail on her. But afterwards, to please her mother, more indeed than Christian prudence dictated, she consented with great repugnance.

Soon did her husband show his bad disposition. It was of no use for her to be silent when he was enraged

or to be humble and kind in order to gain his heart. He allowed himself to be carried away by the slightest motive, and poor Mary had to pay for his anger. Her impetuous husband mortified her daily, and enjoyed tormenting her. Her mother witnessed this ill-treatment, and was very much afflicted at it, particularly as she knew she had forced her daughter to marry such a man. How many parents bewail their daughters' misfortunes when they are beyond remedy! If they would attend to good conduct rather than to worldly interest, if they should put a stop in the beginning to intercourse with persons they knew did not suit, if they kept their daughters under their eye; in fine, if they looked on this matter as one of the most important of life, on which often depends eternal salvation or damnation, they would free themselves from annoyance, and their children from a life of bitterness and despair to which the wrong selection of a husband condemns them. Clara did not look on it in this way, and through false love for her daughter condemned her to a bitter martyrdom.

Besides being of a harsh and violent disposition, her husband was not fond of work, so he went to Madrid; thinking that there heaven would rain down manna, and he could live in idleness. He took up his residence near the house of a certain peddler, who went about the neighbouring villages selling drugs and hardware. Thinking that this business would suit his inclinations, he made acquaintance with the peddler, and tried to join him in his trade. They came to an arrangement, and he compelled his wife to go out with his partner to hawk through the country. Mary resisted as much as she could, as well because it was against her wishes as that it would leave her abandoned by her husband, and thereby expose her to great danger; but his threats and ill usage compelled her in the end to yield. He supplied her with what goods his capital allowed, and gave her in

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charge to an unmarried man, whose character he knew nothing of. Mary went, flying from one precipice to fall into a greater. We all wish to be loved ; but unhappy those who, not finding legitimate love or affection in the persons who should bestow it, seek it in others, for their unlawful love will entail real bitterness.

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## II.

And so it happened to Mary. Gradually forgetting God, who till then had been the balsam of her sufferings she became attached to her companion, and sought in him the love denied her by her husband, who was the origin of the fall and spiritual ruin of his spouse. She herself tells us of the matter thus : " The man and I went through the villages with our wares, and though at first we used to return to renew our stock and deposit our earnings, as I would be a long time separated from my husband, and my familiar intercourse with the man was so continual, wickedness so grew in me that, forgetting God, I determined to leave my husband, and go through the world with the other, not as his friend but his wife." How different would have been her lot if, avoiding intercourse with him as far as possible, she had attended to prayer on her journeys, and frequented the sacraments, to fortify her soul against the temptations of the enemy ! But separated from Him who alone can fill our hearts with peace, she sank from abyss to abyss, and added sin to sin. Adultery was followed by sordid avarice ; and she who, before she lost the holy fear of God, was content with a fair profit, and was noted for truth and integrity in her dealings, once the monster of sin entered her heart, let pass no occasion of increasing her gains, no matter how illicit. We will let herself confess her sin : " I was continually telling lies in my bargains, anxious to deceive those who bought from me



sometimes in the quality, sometimes in the price, and I thought I was doing a grand stroke of business, my only object being to increase my capital by any means whatever." Such is usually the conduct of those who fear not God, nor hope in his Divine Providence; but good Christians expect more prosperity from being sincere and just in their dealings, than from allowing themselves to be enslaved by avarice; and as a rule it turns out so.

Mary's vices became publicly known, and reached her husband's ears, who, finding out where the partners were, determined to have revenge by taking the life of both. Her companion, hearing of the husband's plans, resolved to forestall him by murdering him, believing he was the only object to his full possession of his unfortunate victim. Through God's goodness he revealed his wicked intent to Mary, who was horrified at the crime and prayed and besought him to desist from it, and in the end got him to consent. Not in vain is mercy exercised, for the Lord is accustomed to repay it with a higher mercy. So indeed, after four years of a loose and scandalous life, she began to feel stronger knocks at her heart, by which the Lord called her to penance. But "as I was afraid of my husband" (they are her own words) "and of the man to whom I had two little children, and found myself alone and unprotected in a distant part of the country, and besides felt the cowardice which sin produces in the heart, I could not make up my mind to leave the man, though my sin was staring me in the face." But the infinitely merciful God, who never closes the door of his clemency on those who wander in this exile, continued calling her more and more earnestly, and happy she is if she had not been deaf to His divine inspirations. In the meantime, the peddler, more and more enslaved by his love for her, only thought of binding her still more closely to him. Noticing that she had lately become sad and pensive, he grew jea-

lous and upbraided her with losing her affection for him. On this the poor sinner, suddenly illuminated from above exclaimed: "Wretch that I am! If I had only loved God as I did you, I would not have offended His Divine Majesty!" Ah! what different effects the divine love would have produced! Free from sin she would have laid up immense treasures for eternal glory, and in this valley of tears purity of conscience would have poured on her heart torrents of sweetness. Oh! if we would only give ourselves without reserve to the Lord, as we do to miserable creatures, this world would become a paradise! But now on all sides we find it strewn with briers and thorns.

Whilst the man grew blinder every day Mary began to give ear to the divine calls. By God's will, when passing through Toro, her accomplice fell seriously ill. Thinking that hell was open to devour that poor soul, which gave no sign of repentance, she cried with her whole heart to God and His Blessed Mother to give him a true sorrow for his sins, and that her prayers might be acceptable, she there and then formed a firm resolution to change her wicked life. And she carried out her resolution. When the sick man was free from danger he tried to follow the same tortuous path of vice, but she accused him of his ingratitude to God, and reminded him of the imminent danger he had run of eternal damnation. It was useless; but finding he could not again induce her to offend God, he resolved to be revenged in the very way she wanted, by leaving Toro and abandoning her and her two children in a strange country.

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### III.

Mary, however, was not disheartened at this, but confiding in the infinite goodness of God, she took a child

on each arm and her pack on her shoulders, and went her way. She never knew what became of him who was the cause of her ruin ; nor did she wish at that time to return to her husband for fear of his wrath. And so, freed from the chains which bound her down to sin, purified from all stain by means of a good confession, she thought only of paying to Divine Justice the debts contracted by her iniquity. She first went to Estremadura, supporting herself and her children partly by what she sold, and partly by the alms she got. It was hard on her to ask charity, but necessity obliged her to do so. It was God's will that in all parts she should meet with a good reception, her kind disposition and gentle demeanour attracting to her the sympathy of pious people. As her intention was to retire from the world, and if possible hide herself in the bowels of the earth, after passing through various districts of the province, she reached Batuecas, a place suited to her purpose. Near this place live the Hurdes, a poor, indolent, half-savage race, whose civilisation Antonio Porras, Bishop of Coria, had undertaken with apostolic zeal ; but abandoned since then by successive liberal governments in their repugnant misery and stupid ignorance, they have only been remembered when taxes had to be collected. The Jesuit fathers of the Royal College of Salamanca, among others the celebrated missionaries Fathers Calatayud and Abarizqueta, were accustomed in their apostolic excursions to visit those miserable people. Dwelling in huts placed here and there without order, and surrounded by barren soil and deep precipices, visited only by the wild boar and goat, they hold scarcely any communication with the neighbouring villages. Almost naked, or covered with rags, they hide themselves at sight of any stranger.

To the south of these rocks and wilds there is a picturesque and charming village called Casar de Palo-

mero. This was the place she chose to bewail her sins in, edifying the simple inhabitants by her devout life, which she aimed at making a hard and solitary one. Some distance from the village there were two hermitages, the first consecrated to the martyrs SS. Fabian and Sebastian, and the second, higher up, dedicated to the Holy Cross. One of these, or some other yet more isolated, Mary was proposing to select, when God by evident signs indicated to her His will, that she should return to Segovia, her native place. Having consulted the matter with her confessor, who approved of her design, she resolved to undertake the journey. Great was the opinion of the sanctity which she had acquired; but this very appreciation was one of the motives which induced her to leave that district. Her own wish would be to publish in all directions her grave errors, and shout them out in the market-place, if permitted. "I wish," she used to say, "that those who look on me as good, should know this, in order that they may be undeceived and see who I am, and what I have been, and how opposed my life has been to the judgment they have formed of me." But this desire to be despised, far from lessening the appreciation in which she was held, contributed not a little to increase it, so that the people very much felt the departure of their exemplary neighbour. She had spent a year in that mountainous region when she turned her face to Segovia, begging her way. When she reached the town with her two children she knew no one, having left it a mere child; but God provided a shelter for her, inspiring a good woman of the suburb of St. Laurence to receive the servant of the Lord into her house. She lived here supported by her labour and the assistance of the charitable. One of her first and principal cares was to select a good confessor to direct her soul in the path of perfection. Under his advice she regulated her life in a holy manner, giving

no small space to pious exercises. Exact and faithful in corresponding to the divine inspirations and the counsels of her spiritual father, she soon rose to a high point of perfection.

## V.

About this time she lost one of her children, and with the other she obtained the situation of housekeeper to Don Francisco Benito, a respectable gentleman of the city. As true sanctity does not impede but rather powerfully helps the fulfilment of duty, Mary neglected nothing committed to her charge, to her master's great advantage. But she did not feel content in mind, being too busily engaged with her many occupations to give as much time as she could wish to her exercises of piety and the penances she had imposed on herself. And being unable to suffer, as she said, the high estimation in which she, a poor sinner, was held, she voluntarily retired from her situation and returned to her secluded life.

Then she chose as confessor Father Peter Arias, of the Society of Jesus. This learned and zealous Jesuit, by accustoming her to the methods of meditating proposed by St. Ignatius of Loyola, exercising her in the practice of the particular examination taught by the saint, and stimulating her to daily communion, raised the perfection of that well-disposed soul to a very high degree. By these excellent means an ardent zeal for the glory of God and the good of souls was inflamed in her heart; and, not content now with working only in her own sanctification, she wished to contribute also to the eternal salvation of her neighbours. Animated by this apostolic spirit, she frequently visited the hospital, attended the sick, performed the most humble duties of the establishment, consoled the suffering and the afflicted, encouraged

them to make a good confession, and even helped them to die well when she saw them about departing from this exile. In these Christian visits, with her insinuating discourses about eternal things, she rescued many from their bad state, saved not a few from eternal ruin, and consoled and animated all to bear with resignation the pains of this miserable world. Taking pity, besides, on the intense pains and spiritual prostration of some, she often obtained for them corporal health by her prayers and penances.

From 1720 she added to her regular life attendance at the canonical hours of the cathedral. After imitating as far as she could the life of prayer of the nuns, she joined, according to her capacity, in the orisons of the ministers of Jesus Christ in the divine offices morning and evening. The Lord doubly repaid her efforts, bestowing on her many celestial favours, which she responded to with increased mortifications and penances. On the other hand, the world, which, as a rule, crookedly interprets the works of the just, not only despised her as a fool and idle hypocrite, but even tried to stain her edifying conduct with black calumnies. But she, with her eyes fixed on God, who has to judge us and give to each what is due to him, manfully trampled on human respect and slander, and prepared her soul for the trials with which the Lord might deign to purify her virtues. And they were not few; for, besides the troubles which poverty entails, and the necessity she was under of earning her living and that of her child by the sweat of her brow, besides the torments with which the devil persecuted her to make her abandon the path she had entered on, she was attacked by so many and continuous infirmities that her life seemed a series of uninterrupted sufferings. Nothing of this, however, afflicted her, for she knew that the cross is the golden key which opens to us the celestial treasures: what she did feel was her having

offended the Father of mercies, and lived so long apart from His divine service.

## V.

Nevertheless, to seek some relief from her continual pains, she went, at the advice of her confessors, for some time to the monastery of Our Lady de la Retuerta, the capitular house of the Premonstratensian Fathers, of which Father Stephen de Noriega, who was not unaware of Mary's singular virtue, was superior. In this retirement, where she spent the latter months of 1733, she dictated, by order of Father Arias, the principal events of her life, which he wrote down. And, notwithstanding her prostrate state, this she did so clearly and rapidly that he could scarcely follow her. Later on she returned to Segovia, without experiencing any improvement, but rather buried in a sea of torments, and rendered a lively image of the patient Job. On the 9th of August, 1734, they thought she was dead. She recovered, but on the seventh day after, having received the holy sacraments with the tenderest devotion, she went to heaven to celebrate the triumph of the Queen of Angels, for whom she always entertained an ardent devotion and love. The concourse at her funeral was what might be expected from the fame of her sanctity. Her body was exposed for three days to satisfy the devotion of the faithful, and was afterwards buried in the cathedral between the high chapel and the choir. Some prodigies are also mentioned as having been wrought through this illustrious daughter of Segovia, who, in her humble position, knew how to make a conquest of the kingdom of heaven.

## ST. ELOY, BISHOP OF NOYON.

## I.

**BETWEEN** St. Eloy and St. Facius, both silversmiths, we chose the latter, not because the former would not have afforded us many things to admire and imitate, but because St. Facius never gave up his trade, whilst the other was elevated for his virtues to the high dignity of bishop. However, as many guilds of silversmiths venerate St. Eloy as patron, we will here give a compendium of his life.

St. Eloy was the son of Euquerius and Terrigia, and was born in Chatelac, two leagues from Limoges, about the year 588. Educated in the holy fear of God, he was apprenticed to Abdon, a silversmith and coiner of Limoges, where from his application and natural smartness, he made rapid progress in his trade. His talents and disposition, and above all his virtues, gained for him the esteem of all who knew him. He was remarkable for his candour, frankness, and modesty, which were conspicuous in a young man gifted with great facility in expressing himself with clearness and elegance, and a more than ordinary smartness in all the labours of his art. A fervent Christian, he not only fulfilled his civil and religious duties, but went to hear the divine word and attended the ceremonies of the Church. When he had served his apprenticeship, he went on some business to Paris, where he became acquainted with Bobo, treasurer to Clotilde II. By his virtue and modesty he soon gained his affection and that of other nobles and



plebeians. The prince, struck by the praises he heard of the young silversmith, entrusted to him the making of a seat or throne which should be a monument of his royal magnificence. With the gold and precious stones given him our artist made two thrones, adorned with all the qualities required. The king was highly pleased as well at the fineness and beauty of the work as by the virtue and probity of the workman, and appointed him director of the mint. Not content with giving him this proof of esteem, the monarch gave him apartments in the palace, and consulted him on grave affairs of state. But these distinctions and marks of appreciation did not prevent him from following his trade. He dedicated himself with special pleasure to the making and adornment of reliquaries of saints. He ornamented with regal magnificence the tombs of St. Martin of Tours, and St. Dionysius, Bishop of Paris. It was he made the reliquaries of St. Quentin, of SS. Crispin and Crispinian, of St. Lucian, of St. Pintus, of St. Germain of Paris, of St. Severinus, of St. Genevieve and others, in which he displayed delicacy of execution and good taste.

But neither the coining of money, nor the chiselling of precious ornaments interfered with his pious exercises. Whilst busy at work he had a book open beside him, that he might, without loss of time, instruct himself in the divine law by turning his eyes to it now and then. His room was full of pious books, among which the Sacred Scriptures held the first and principal place. He spent the greater part of his leisure time in perusing them. Not honours, nor flattery, nor the corruption usual in the courts of kings, infected the pure heart of our artisan, but rather made him conceive a greater contempt for the goods of earth, and induced him to lead a more austere and penitent life to save himself from the vices by which he was surrounded. He did, indeed, appear in court in rich dresses of silk, then very rare,

with a cloak bordered with gold and a cincture covered with precious stones; but under these garments he usually wore a rough hair-shirt. This, however, did not appear to him sufficient, and he made up his mind to renounce all and give himself without reserve to his Lord God. For this purpose he made a general confession of his whole life, as the beginning of his new resolutions; he distributed among the poor the best things he had, and put on cheap clothes, using sometimes a common cord for cincture. The king occasionally presented him with garments, but the saint transformed them into alms, which he gave to the needy. His charity and disinterestedness were unbounded. He was followed by troops of beggars; and he consoled all, and sent none away empty-handed. Every day he gave some of them their dinner in his own house, and he himself served them at table, and dined off what they left as if he were a servant. Though he himself did not use fleshmeat, he yet prepared dishes of veal for his indigent guests, who were so dear to him.

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## II.

He frequently fasted two or three consecutive days; and sometimes when dinner hour came, and he had nothing else to give, divided the whole of his meal among the poor, trusting that Divine Providence would not fail him. He acted in the same way when any opportunity of redeeming captives turned up. He specially redeemed Saxon slaves, who in certain places were sold in droves. Once under his control he gave them full liberty to return to their own country, to remain in his service, or to retire to a monastery. Several of his servants or those redeemed by him flourished in virtue and sanctity.

Besides these works of mercy, which formed his delight, he displayed great zeal in burying the bodies of malefactors condemned to capital punishment.

It may be said his prayer was continual. He had many relics, before which he prayed long on his knees, or spent the time in spiritual reading. If the monarch happened to summon him while engaged in prayer, the saint, considering that the king of heaven and earth was before all the kings in the world, continued his orisons, and did not rise till he had completed his task. One of his pious practices was to chant the divine office with his workmen and servants. When leaving or entering the house, when beginning or ending any work, he armed himself with the sign of the cross and with prayer. And in all these practices there was nothing forced or unnatural, but everything was done with simplicity, devotion, and recollection. And all this was the more remarkable in this courtier as he was a very handsome man. He was tall and elegant, with a majestic head, a healthy colour, and hair naturally curled. Candour and prudence were depicted on his countenance, and his look was the expression of the peace which reigned in his heart. With his innocence and virtue he acquired much more influence with the king than other courtiers with their flattery and intrigues.

He had the same influence with Dagobert, son and successor to Clotaire, who died in 628; but he never availed himself of it except to inspire the monarch with sentiments of justice, clemency, and religion. He told him the truth, but not offensively; he spoke to him with freedom, but with respect. The corrupt and envious courtiers who found in the silversmith's virtue and constant reprehension of their vices, and in his prudence and discretion a powerful obstacle in carrying out their palace intrigues, tried by calumny to blast his reputation and put between him and the prince; but their fraud



and lies only served to add new lustre to the servant of God's integrity, and procure for him more solid veneration in Dagobert's mind. He loaded Eloy with gifts, but did not thereby make him richer, for as soon as he received one he employed it in the alleviation of the poor or in the foundation of some pious establishment. He founded the abbey of Solinac, where more than one hundred monks sang the divine praises while working with their hands in different occupations. Having received from King Dagobert the gift of a house in Paris, he established and endowed a convent, in which up to three hundred nuns lived under the direction of St. Aura. When finishing this convent, Eloy remarked that he had taken a foot of ground more than the king had given him. Grieving over this involuntary incident, he threw himself at the prince's feet, and implored pardon for his crime, as he called it. The monarch, charmed by such rectitude of conscience, doubled his first gift, and when Eloy had retired he said to the bystanders : "See how faithful and exact are those who follow Jesus Christ. My officers and ministers rob me of whole towns if they can, whilst Eloy trembles for having inculpably taken an inch of ground which did not belong to him."

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### III.

Such was the confidence which the king had in his director of the Mint, that irritated by the frequent incursions made by the Bretons on his vassals, he thought no one more suitable to put an end to them than our saint. The fortunate issue of the commission justified the sovereign's confidence. Eloy, by his zeal and pru-

dence compelled Indicael, the Breton prince, to present himself to Dagobert to more quickly appease his just indignation.

The monarch became daily more attached to Eloy, but being anxious to employ him on business of great importance, required him to take the oath of allegiance, as was usual in like circumstances. The saint, who could see no occasion for this act of religion, asked again and again for time to think over it. But the prince, knowing the cause of his fears, praised his delicacy of conscience, and regarding it as a surer proof of fidelity than the oaths of others, dispensed with the obligation. The silversmith's heroic example, his piety and mercy, made a deep impression on the mind of St. Oven, then about twelve years of age, attached to the court, and afterwards bishop of Rouen, and an intimate friend of our saint's. One and the other, though laymen, not only worked hard to have a council summoned in Orleans for the condemnation of certain heretics of that time, but declared war on simony, till then pretty common in France.

On the death of Acarius, Bishop of Noyon, the neighbouring prelates believed that no one was more suited for the vacant see than the illustrious silversmith, and elected him to it. St. Eloy trembled at the sole consideration of the charge they wished to impose on him ; but convinced that it was God's will he bowed his head, and was ordained with his friend St. Oven, in 640. His new dignity made no change in his mode of life, if not to increase his watching and penances. The same humility, the same spirit of poverty, the same love of prayer, the same charity to the poor and sick, were still conspicuous in him. Certain days of the week he served twelve poor men at table with the same love as ever, and felt singular pleasure in being with them, consoling and assisting them.



But his zeal was not the same. His new character of pastor had inspired him with an ardour for the extension of the divine glory, which burned and consumed him. When he had restored ecclesiastical discipline, which had become somewhat impaired, he directed his efforts to the conversion of various people yet infidels, such as the Saxons, the Suevi, and, above all, those of the districts of Gand and Courtrai. Great were the dangers he ran among those barbarians, whom his sweetness, charity, and perseverance succeeded in civilising. He received all with the affection of a loving father, instructed them with patience and exhorted them with fervour to walk unhesitatingly in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. He feared not fatigue or risks when there was question of preventing sin and promoting the observance of the divine law. Having preached on St. Peter's day against dances, which were the occasion of sin to his people, he incurred the animosity of some malcontents, who went so far as to threaten his life. But all their threats were incapable of intimidating the zealous prelate, and particularly that of the crown of martyrdom which he anxiously longed for. The following year, on the same day, he preached on the same subject with greater earnestness and vigour. On this the officers of the lord of the soil, abusing their power, raised the country against the saint. But he, appealing to extreme measures hurled excommunication against the guilty, and cut them off as rotten members from the body of the Church. The Omnipotent confirmed the anathema by visibly striking fifty of the delinquents. But publicly repenting of their sin, they were miraculously cured by St. Eloy, whom God had distinguished with the gift of prophecy and miracles. He predicted that the French monarchy should be divided among the three sons of Clovis II., and should be reunited under Thierry, the youngest of the three. This fact is mentioned by his

friend Oven in his life of the saint, written before the fulfilment of the prophecy.

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#### IV.

His zeal was indefatigable. He distributed to his flock almost daily the bread of the Divine Word, exhorting them with unction and clearness to the fulfilment of the promises made in baptism. He inculcated alms, prayer, the invocation of saints, the frequenting of the sacraments, and the holy custom of arming themselves frequently with the sign of the cross. He had spent nineteen and a half years in the direction of his flock, when the Lord revealed to him the proximity of his departure. Having foretold his death to his disciples some time before his last illness, and seeing them deeply affected and weeping for the loss of so loving a father, he said to them : "Children, be not sad ; you should rather congratulate me. For a long time have I been sighing for the end of my life, and I long to feel myself free from the miseries of this world, whose weight oppresses me." Attacked by fever, he ceased not to pray. On the sixth day of his illness he called his disciples around his bed, and so pathetically exhorted them to virtue, that they could not restrain their tears. Comforted with the last sacraments, he tranquilly expired reciting the canticle of ancient Simeon : "Now, O Lord, dismiss thy servant in peace." His death occurred on the 1st of December, 659, at the age of seventy years and some months.

At the first news of his illness Queen Batilda started from Paris, accompanied by her son and many courtiers ; but she found him dead. After bedewing the sacred

body with her tears, she desired to take it as a precious treasure to the monastery of Chelles ; but the inhabitants of Noyon, who equally loved their deceased pastor, opposed the queen's wishes. This lady soon after sold all her jewels and adornments and gave the price of them to the poor, with the exception of a pair of golden bracelets, which she ordered to be made into a cross to be placed over St. Eloy's tomb. She also made for it a canopy of gold and silver, which, as it emitted great brilliancy from its gold and precious stones, was covered with a cloth bordered with silk on days of penance, such as the time of Lent. It was noticed later on that this cloth gave out a kind of juice which restored the sick to health. The Lord glorified those venerable remains with many other miracles, as if proclaiming by means of those dry bones that there is no state in life in which we cannot reach the height of Christian perfection. This seemed to be said by the mortal remains of St. Eloy, the honour and glory of silversmiths and coiners.



## ST. AFRA.

## I.

WHEN reading the life of St. Margaret of Cortona, one cannot help admiring the infinite mercy of God in withdrawing from the sink of corruption souls so forgetful of their eternal salvation. Great indeed are the chastisements with which God threatens the lascivious, and terrible the examples He has made and is daily making of those who allow themselves to be mastered by the



vice of the flesh. But if these chastisements and examples warn us not to defer for one moment our conversion, and not to presume on the divine mercy, on the other hand, the innumerable saints, men and women, whom we venerate, who were buried in the impure sink, should encourage us to throw ourselves at once into the arms of that loving Father who watches for the prodigal son to give him the kiss of peace and pardon, and count him again among his beloved children. To add to the example of Margaret, who died in the odour of sanctity through the penances with which she blotted out her crimes, the example of another woman who washed away her scandalous disorders with the blood of martyrdom, and to inspire all with the desire of serving the God of mercies, we are going to copy the acts of the triumphs of St. Afra and her companions, won over to Jesus Christ by the zeal of the illustrious St. Narcissus.

Afra lived in Ausburg, a town of Rhetia, at the end of the third and beginning of the fourth centuries, and was the scandal and stumbling-block of the whole place. She kept a house of ill-fame, and had with her Digna, Eunomia, and Eutropia, leading the same vile life. St. Narcissus, the Bishop of Gerona, of which place he was a native, having escaped for the present from the persecution raised against the Christians, went to Ausburg to preach the faith, and took up his lodging in Afra's house. Blessed hospitality which gained heaven for her! Moved by the saint's example and exhortations, Afra renounced her disordered life and did penance for her sins. Her three companions were also converted, and were baptised by the holy bishop. The latter had left for Gerona, where he received the crown of martyrdom, together with Felix, his deacon, and many other Christians, when Maximian-Herculeus, colleague of the Emperor Diocletian, who committed barbarous cruelties throughout his dominions, made his sanguinary fury

felt by the Christians of Ausburg. Afra, it appears, was then performing the canonical penance, during which it was forbidden to sinners to attend the divine offices, and during Mass they had to pray at the door of the church. Piously indignant with herself, she wished to employ in the alleviation of the poor all she had gained by her illicit commerce; but the discipline of those times rejected the offerings of public sinners, and no Christian would accept even as an alms what was acquired by such reprobate means. Our penitent saint would not retain the fruit of her sin, and threw it all away, keeping only what she had lawfully acquired. The Lord rewarded this disinterestedness and proof of her sincere conversion.

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## II.

When Gaius, the prefect of the town, heard of Afra's conversion, he ordered her to be taken and brought before his tribunal. When she presented herself the impious judge said to her: Sacrifice to the gods, for you know well it is better to live than imprudently expose yourself to die in torments.

AFRA. Unfortunate me! I have enough of past sins without adding new ones. No, do not expect me to ever follow your advice.

GAIUS. Go to the temple, Afra, and sacrifice to the gods.

AFRA. Jesus Christ is my God: I love Him and have Him continually before my eyes, and confess my sins to Him with all the bitterness of my heart; and as I am unworthy to offer Him the sacrifice of the altar, I long to sacrifice myself to the glory of His name, that my body, stained with so many impurities, may be cleansed in His blood.

GAIUS. As far as I understand you are a prostitute, and consequently cannot aspire to the friendship of the God of the Christians; this is why I advise you to sacrifice to our gods, who are much more indulgent.

AFRA. Jesus Christ, my Lord, has said that He came down from heaven expressly for poor sinners, and the Gospel tells us that He allowed a prostitute to bathe His feet with her tears, and pardoned her all her sins. He never displayed the slightest contempt for sinners, but, on the contrary, treated familiarly with them, and ate at the same table with them.

GAIUS. At least sacrifice, that our gods may bring you many generous lovers to enrich you.

AFRA. I prefer a thousand times to die rather than receive anything from such men. All the gifts I received I cast from me without retaining one. The poor faithful, notwithstanding my entreaties, would not accept a penny. Though I asked them to take it to pray for me, I had to throw it away, as I told you. Do you want me, then, to accept what I regard with horror and as vile dirt.

GAIUS. But your God rejects you and looks on you with contempt. In vain, then, do you call Him your God. How could a prostitute like you dare to call herself a Christian?

AFRA. You are right: I am unworthy to be loved by my God, but I know that when God loves He consults His own mercy and not the merits of those whom He honours with His love. And I believe that Jesus Christ has admitted me into the number of His beloved.

GAIUS. How do you know that God loves you?

AFRA. I know that God has not rejected me, because He has given me the grace to confess His holy name before you, and I have the firm hope that this free and sincere confession will obtain for me the pardon of all my sins.

GAIUS. Leave aside such foolish nonsense, and take my advice and sacrifice to the gods, who alone can save you and make you happy.

AFRA. You are mistaken. There is no one but Jesus Christ can make me happy, no one that can save my soul. Was it not He who saved the good thief, and promised him paradise for having confessed His divinity a few moments before his death?

GAIUS. Oh, sacrifice to the gods, or I shall order you to be scourged in presence of your lovers.

AFRA. Do as you wish, but know that only the recollection of my sins can cause me confusion or pain.

GAIUS. I am sorry for wasting so much time with a prostitute. I tell you again, sacrifice to the gods, or I will condemn you to death.

AFRA. Ah! that is just what my heart desires, to be deemed worthy of dying in torments for my God.

GAIUS. This last time I tell you, sacrifice to the gods, or I will order you to be burned alive.

AFRA. Let this wretched body, stained with so many crimes, suffer a thousand torments and burn, for it well deserves it, but I shall never consent to add new stains to the past by sacrificing to demons.

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### III.

The unjust judge, seeing Afra's constancy, pronounced the following sentence on her: "That Afra, known in the whole town of Ausburg as a common prostitute, and calling herself, besides, a Christian, be burned alive for refusing to sacrifice to the gods." She was immediately handed over to the executioners, who carried her to an

island in the river Lech, and, stripping her, tied her to a post. She lifted up her eyes to heaven, and prayed with tears, saying: "O Lord Jesus Christ, omnipotent God, who camest to call, not the righteous, but sinners to repentance, accept now the penance of my sufferings, and by this temporal fire deliver me from everlasting fire, which torments both body and soul." Whilst the executioners were heaping a pile of vine branches about her, and setting fire to them, she was heard to say: "I return Thee thanks, O Lord Jesus Christ, for the honour Thou hast done me in receiving me a holocaust for Thy name's sake, Thou who hast vouchsafed to offer Thyself upon the altar of the cross a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, the just for the unjust, and for sinners. I offer myself a victim to Thee, O my God, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, world without end. Amen."

Whilst the fire was burning and the blessed Afra was cleaving her way to heaven through the flames, her three maids, Eunomia, Eutropia, and Digna, envying the lot of their mistress, were watching her triumph from the bank of the river. When the execution was over, they employed a boatman to take them to the island, where they found the body of their mistress intact. A female slave who accompanied them swam back to carry the news to Hilaria, the saint's mother. This virtuous woman went the following night with two priests, took away the body in secret and buried it in a sepulchre which she had constructed for her family two leagues from Ausburg. The tombs of that period were magnificent and of great capacity.

But the thing was not done so quietly as not to reach the judge's ears, who immediately sent a guard to the place to arrest Hilaria and her three companions. He told them to use no violence, but to try to induce them to sacrifice to the gods; and if they consented, to

bring them back to the town with all the honours usually paid to distinguished persons; but if not, to burn them alive in the tomb itself, but by no means to allow them to escape. The soldiers carried out the cruel order to the letter. They employed promises and threats to make them apostatise, but finding them firm as rocks, and all their efforts fruitless, they filled the mouth of the tomb with dry sticks, and set fire to them. Thus ended the life of those holy penitents, who went to join the blessed Afra in heaven. St. Afra is the principal patron of the city of Ausburg.



BLESSED PETER DE ACOTANTO AND  
VENERABLE JOHN BORGI.

I.

CHARITY makes the poor rich and the rich poor, supplying the former in their industry with an inexhaustible means of succouring the needy, and moving the latter to pour their wealth into the hands of the indigent. The examples of the saints are an indelible proof of this truth, and of the power of the doctrine and grace of Jesus Christ. But to present all we have said on this subject in compendium, we are about to give a brilliant confirmation of the second part of our opening assertion in Peter de Acotanto, reduced to mendicity through

succouring the needy, and of the first in John Borgi, converted from a poor man into a rich father of the indigent. Acotanto was born in Venice, and belonged to one of the most distinguished families of that republic. Imbued with the Christian maxims, he learned how to lead in the midst of the world a hidden life in Jesus Christ, a life of abnegation and charity. Never could vanities or idle diversions impose on a heart ever guided by the torch of divine grace. Assiduous prayer and the light acquired in the exercises of piety taught him from his early days the necessity of watching over our senses and passions, that the infernal dragon who goes about seeking to devour us, may not find us unarmed or unprepared; and Peter, docile to the divine teaching, watched and prayed, and strengthened his heart with the sacraments in order to be able to resist like a good soldier the assaults of the enemy. Like frail barks, we sail over a sea exposed to many and terrible tempests, full of rocks and banks, and infested by daring and unscrupulous pirates. Hence, if the pilot is not always on the watch, even in times of calm, he is sure to fall into the hands of his enemies, or impinge on some dangerous rock. For this reason, Acotanto, anxious to reach the port of eternal salvation, endeavoured to avoid all the dangers possible by renouncing the world and its vanities. At the feet of Jesus, hidden on our altars, he tasted delights incomparably superior to those enjoyed by unfortunate worldlings in their ominous slavery, and ceased not to heap up merits by the practice of all the virtues. Among these, however, virginity and mercy to the poor shone with special lustre.

No care, no precaution appeared to him excessive to preserve in all its brightness this precious jewel of virginity, so esteemed by Jesus Christ, and recommended by all the Fathers of the Church. It makes man truly

an angel, by freeing his heart from all carnal and terrestrial affection, and prepares in him a dwelling more worthy of the divinity. Our blessed Peter, enamoured of this virtue, and holily avaricious of the privilege reserved to virgins, that is, of accompanying in heaven the Divine Lamb clothed in white stoles, avoided everything that might sully its brightness, and laboured unweariedly to defend it from the attacks of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

As to his charity to the poor, it really had no limits. The Lord had given him great wealth, with which he might have competed in luxury and display with the first nobles of Venice; but the servant of God, who condemned in his heart all such extravagance, and looked on it as a crime which must be atoned for either in this world or the next; who venerated the poor as beloved brothers, as suffering members of the mystic body of Jesus Christ, as co-heirs of the kingdom of eternal glory, could not regard their miseries without commiseration, and reaching a compassionate hand to the poor lowly one. Such was his mercy to the poor, such his generous charity, that he not only spent his rich inheritance in their relief, but sold his furniture, and at last had to beg at his acquaintances' doors for something to keep himself from actual starvation. This heroic degree of charity was reached by this zealous imitator of that Divine Master, who became poor for love of us, made Himself a slave, and hesitated not to give His own precious body and blood for the food of our souls.

In winter, above all, our hero's great mercy was conspicuous. The city of Venice was intersected by innumerable canals, which, in rainy weather, used to inundate the low-lying districts and isolate the families living in them. These families were commonly the most miserable in the city; and when winter and the



rains lasted an unusual time, they were often reduced to extreme destitution. Women and children particularly, who had not strength to make much effort, were often, when surrounded by the water, exposed to perish of hunger. To all these the servant of God attended. He had a boat, and he would load it with provisions, and when night came, to hide his heroism, would turn boatman, and traversing by the light of a lamp those many canals, would come as an angel of Providence to the houses of the sick and the needy and supply them with all necessaries in the shape of food, clothes, and fire, which he carried on his back from the boat to their huts. In these and similar works of mercy did this father of the poor, as they called him, spend his ample means. And when all was exhausted, he thought it no dishonour to beg from door to door, as we said, for himself and his poor, but appreciated this poverty more than all the wealth of the world.

At last, full of years and deserts, he peacefully ended his days by a death precious in the eyes of God. He preserved his virginity intact during his long life. His death occurred in 1180, according to some, and according to others in 1187. The funeral cortege was composed of an innumerable number of poor, who bewailed his death as that of a beloved father; but their grief and lamentations were soon converted into joy and gladness by the miracles which were wrought through his intercession. His body, which had been buried in a corner of the cemetery, was providentially discovered in 1250, and was found as entire and fresh as if he had just expired. It was dressed in his hair-cloth, a proof of the care he took to control his passions and appetites. In 1349 his relics, to the general satisfaction of the Venetians, were translated to St. Basil's Church, and placed on the altar erected in his honour. Clement XIII., anxious to excite in the Venetians devotion to

him, and spur them on to an imitation of his virtues, gave them authority to celebrate his feast, an authority extended later on to the whole country composing the dominions of that ancient republic. We will now pass on to the other example.

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## II.

Even yet there is in Rome a capacious edifice, which serves as a lodging and school to numerous orphans, who would otherwise groan in misery. The immortal Pius IX. celebrated his first Mass in it on Easter Sunday, 1819, and among its poor children gave the first proofs of that generous charity so well known throughout the Catholic world. This hospice is a palpable evidence of the rich fecundity of Christian charity.

Last century was drawing to a close when a poor old artisan in the Eternal City, without learning or fortune, without friends or protection, opened in his house an asylum for destitute orphan children. This poor workman was John Borgi, a native of Rome, and baptised in the parish of St. Laurence on the 18th of February, 1732. His parents were Perantonio Borgi, of Zagarolo, and Dorothy Mondei, of Rome, poor but God-fearing people. When the Pope, with imperial munificence, built the sacristy of the Vatican, John was among the masons engaged on it, and during the period of its erection he employed all the time he could spare in attending the sick in the hospital of the Holy Ghost. In this charitable work he sometimes spent whole nights, so that he would fall asleep from weariness and fatigue during the day. He was adorned with singular piety, not circumscribed to mere external practices, as sometimes happens among ignorant people, but truly

solid, and thus he transmitted it to his children. He daily spent a long time in prayer before a crucifix, heard the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and received communion. He was a member of the oratory, usually called del P. Caravita, and as such often went through the Rotonda chanting the holy Rosary, to which he had great devotion. When returning from this holy exercise he observed that some children spent the night on the steps of the Pantheon, sleeping in the open air, and could not rest till he had taken them home to his humble cabin in the street of Cartari, near Vallicella. There he charitably gave them shelter, and lest they might be injured by idleness, and that they might contribute something to their support, he placed them in some workshops where they might learn an honest trade. At first he maintained four of these poor waifs. On festival days he went with them through the streets singing devout hymns, to the great edification of the public. God was pleased with his work, and sent him help in his undertaking. One day two venerable priests came to his door; one was Father Pinchetti, attached to the Vatican, afterwards bishop of Amelia, and the other Father Dipietro, afterwards cardinal. They came to visit the orphans and their loving father, and admiring the charity of the servant of God, as well as the order observed in the midst of his poverty, offered to become their protectors. Father Dipietro allowed them thirty Roman scudi a month, which was the whole income of his benefice. With this aid the industrious mason collected as many as fifteen orphans, which was all his house could accommodate. He called them children, and they called him "Tata," which in the Roman dialect means father. Hence he was known as "Tata Giovanni."

As his growing family could not find place in his little cabin, he had to look out for a more capacious

shelter. For this purpose the good priest, Dipietro, rented a flat in the palace Ruggia, situate in the street Julia. In proportion to the growth in the number of the orphans the alms also increased; so that having opened a subscription, in which many of the Pope's dependents figured, some hundred Roman scudi a month were collected. With this and the boys' wages (for they were able to earn something now) they lived at comparative ease. However, after a few years these sources of income were exhausted, and then the magnanimous Pius VI. came to their aid. He bought for them the palace Ruggia, which they had only rented, and sent them linen, cloth, wine, bread, oil, and money. The love with which his Holiness recompensed the poor mason's charity, and disinterestedness was very great; he stopped him whenever he met him on a walk with his orphans, spoke to each one of them, and inquired what their names and trades were. "Tata Giovanni," corresponding to these marks of affection, would make his children declaim some little piece before his Holiness, with which he was well repaid and highly pleased.

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### III.

Some evil-minded persons tried to discredit John in the eyes of the Pontiff, and deprive him of the succour which the Pope gave him; but they could never advance a step in that direction. Some cardinals and prelates used to visit the poor old man's establishment, and were struck by the good government and order observed in so numerous a family of waifs rescued from the idleness of the streets, and belonging to the dregs of the people, by a man who had no rule but the generous

charity which burned his heart. God blessed him. Though he could neither read nor write, he had as much knowledge as could be expected to adorn a man of his class, so that he not only knew the Catechism perfectly, and could explain it with ease and grace, but was able to repeat with wonderful correctness the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin in Latin, and many other psalms, which he chanted with his orphans with edifying fervour.

Every Friday he visited the seven basilicas of the holy city barefooted. Every morning, after performing his private devotions, he took his little ones at a very early hour to the Church of the Suffrages to hear Mass, that they might be in time for their business. He made them go to confession and communion frequently, and gave them the example himself. It was a moving spectacle to see on festival days the long procession of orphans, dressed in brown cloth, going with measured step first to the oratory of Father Caravita, singing the Office of the Blessed Virgin through the streets, and afterwards to whatever church the Forty Hours Adoration was celebrated in, no matter how distant it might be. All these works of charity and zeal did not cool the affection he had for the sick. And as his paternal solicitude for his orphans did not allow him to visit the hospital of the Holy Ghost daily, he used to send some of the bigger boys to take his place, and attend the poor patients with all the charity with which he could inspire them.

When in the last year of the past century Pius VI., on account of the evils and dangers which threatened the Church, published an extraordinary jubilee, our mason walked in penitential procession with his little orphans. He himself went in front, with a crown of thorns on his head a rope round his neck, and a heavy cross on his shoulders. The children followed bare-

footed, like their master, and thus they went, two by two, singing their pious hymns as usual. In this way they visited the prescribed churches, and inspired with devotion all who saw them, many of whom shed tears of compunction and penance.

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## V.

A good Genovese, named Francis Cervetti, edified by the servant of God's charity, and anxious to emulate his great virtues, joined him in his noble undertaking. They were soon united in the bonds of fraternal union, and the Genovese having more learning, taught the orphans to read and write. But as grace does not destroy nature, and the two were of opposite dispositions, they at last separated, each one going his own way. Our mason remained as he was, and Francis, who also loved the destitute poor, joined John Pelegrini, a Portuguese, a mason also, and a man of holy life, and with him dedicated himself to collecting orphans and abandoned children. These two were joined by a gentleman, who became a voluntary beggar for the support of the orphans. With his military uniform and sword, trampling on human respect and the foolish maxims of the world, he was not ashamed to serve Jesus Christ by begging an alms from door to door for the poor children. This good gentleman afterwards died full of virtues among the poor of the Hospital of the Holy Ghost. John and Francis, each in his own way, pursued their course relieving and consoling the little ones. Francis, dying the death of the just, went to receive his reward on the 28th of August, 1794. Our mason, though an old man, indefatigably continued his work of mercy, till four years after, on the 29th of June, 1798, a fit of apoplexy carried him off in the midst of his orphans. It is wonder-

ful how a man confiding only in Divine Providence could maintain and educate more than ninety children, who would otherwise have been sunk in corruption and misery. His body, amid the tears of his children, was taken *in forma pauperis* to the parish of St. Nicholas, and buried apart.

Ah! how much can be done by great souls in the midst of poverty! And they would have many imitators if men in authority would only encourage, instead of repressing sentiments so noble.


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## Reading from the History of the Holy Family.

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### FROM THE TRANSFIGURATION TO THE HISTORY OF THE RICH MAN.

To the prediction of suffering and toil, the Lord united the promise of the lasting reward of the just, and even gave them a specimen of the eternal delights they are to enjoy in heaven. Six days after the conference we have mentioned, He went up with Peter, James, and John, to a high hill, which is believed to be Mount Thabor; there, while engaged in prayer, the world soon disappeared from their view, and Jesus Christ presented Himself to them, full of indescribable glory and majesty. Surrounded by a celestial aureola, His countenance beamed like the sun; His garments were white as snow, and He had Moses and Elias on either side, who spoke to Him of the excessive love He was to manifest in His passion. Peter was beside himself at this sight, which only gave a slight idea of the glory of heaven, and cried out: "Lord, it is good for us to be here: if Thou wilt let us make here three tabernacles, one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." He had scarcely pronounced the last word when a bright cloud intercepted the vision, and they





heard a voice, which said: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him." At this voice they fell down full of fear, but Jesus called them and said: "Arise, and fear not." They opened their eyes, and all had disappeared, Jesus alone remaining with them. Thus does the glory of the world vanish, by times even with the loss of Jesus! When coming down from the mountain our Lord charged them not to mention this favour to anyone till after His resurrection.

On the side of the hill there were others of His disciples disputing with the Scribes, because they were unable to cure a young man possessed by the devil. When Jesus appeared, all the people ran to salute Him with profound respect. The father of the young man told Him what was wrong, and how His disciples were unable to effect a cure, and besought Him to have mercy on an afflicted father. "Bring him hither," said our Lord, "and He rebuked him, and the devil went out of him, and the child was cured from that hour." When our Lord retired to His lodgings His disciples asked Him why they could not cure the boy. "And Jesus said to them: Because of your unbelief. But this kind is not cast out but by prayer and fasting."

Our Divine Master was constantly visiting the different places of Galilee, availing Himself of every occasion to prepare the Apostles for the terrible tempest which was about being raised against Him, and from which He should come out victorious by dying on an infamous cross. But they, when they heard of affronts and sufferings, paid no attention, but were engaged disputing with each other who should be the first. They might well have seen that Jesus wanted no worldly supremacy. Whilst they were passing through Galilee on one occasion, Peter and John were in Capharnaum and were obliged to pay a tribute of two didrachmas, one each, by

which all Jews contributed to the expenses of the temple. The collectors asked Peter whether his Master paid the tribute. Our Lord told Peter that as He was the Son of God He was bound to pay no tribute, but still, to avoid disputes and scandal, He ordered him to go to the sea, and cast in a hook, and in the mouth of the first fish he caught he would find what would pay for both. Whilst Peter was carrying out our Lord's instructions, and he really did find a piece of money in the fish's mouth, various disciples came to Him disputing still about the supremacy in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus knew their thoughts, and all about the altercation they had had, and taking a child He placed it in the midst of them, saying : " Amen, I say to you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven. . . . Woe to the world because of scandals ! . . . Woe to the man by whom the scandal cometh ! . . . If he scandalise one of these little ones that believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea." And then, in order that we should understand the necessity of separating from the occasion of sin, He tells us that if our stumbling-block were as dear to us as our eye, or hand, or foot, we should cut it off and cast it from us : for it is better for us to enter heaven lame, or maimed, or blind, than with two feet, or hands, or eyes, that is, in company with one who induces us to sin, to be cast into the depths of hell. " See that you despise not one of these little ones," He added, " for I say to you, that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven. For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost. What think you ? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them should go

astray, doth he not leave the ninety-nine in the mountains, and goeth to seek that which is gone astray? And if so that he find it, amen I say to you, he rejoiceth more for that than the ninety-nine that went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." Hence we see that our damnation is the fruit of our sins, and should be attributed to them alone. Our Lord afterwards gave them rules for fraternal correction, exhorting them, before making a breach of friendship, to try every possible means of conciliation which prudence may suggest. Having on this occasion conferred on the Apostles the power of binding and loosing, that is, the faculty of pardoning sins and imposing penances, Peter asked Him: "Lord, how often shall my brother offend against me, and I forgive him--till seven times?" "I say not to thee," answered Jesus, "till seven times, but till seventy times seven times;" that is to say, as often as truly penitent he ask pardon from you. And to inculcate more and more this benignity and sweetness in pardoning injuries, He proposed to them the following parable: "Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened to a king who would take an account of his servants, and when he had begun to take the account, one was brought to him that owed him ten thousand talents. And as he had not wherewith to pay it, his lord commandeth that he should be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. But that servant falling down, besought him, saying: Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And the lord of the servant being moved with pity, let him go, and forgave him the debt." Notwithstanding so illustrious an example of liberality, the servant went to one of his own debtors, who only owed him a hundred pence, and inhumanly steeling his heart to his tears and supplications, ceased not harassing him till he put him into jail. His fellow-servants were


scandalized at such cruelty, and ran to tell their master, who, enraged at such shameful conduct, called up his debtor anew, and said to him: "Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest me: shouldst not thou then have had compassion also on thy fellow-servant, as I had compassion on thee? And his lord being angry, delivered him to the torturers until he paid all the debt. So also shall my heavenly Father do to you if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts."

The feast of Pentecost was now approaching, which was the last that Jesus celebrated in his mortal career. For this purpose He determined to go to Jerusalem; but, in order to secure a lodging, He sent his disciples before, charging them at the same time to preach the Gospel. An incident occurred to them on the way which deserves special mention, as we may derive a lesson from it. In a city of Samaria, when the people heard that the Apostles were going to Jerusalem, as they were on bad terms with the Jews, they refused them entrance into the town. James and John were shocked at this want of hospitality, and asked the Lord if they should command fire to descend from heaven and destroy the place. Jesus reprehended them for this feeling of vengeance, and told them they knew not what spirit moved them; but that He did not come to destroy, but to save souls. On another occasion He was in Martha's house in Bethania, about three-quarters of a league from Jerusalem. "And she had a sister called Mary, who, sitting also at the Lord's feet, heard his word. But Martha was busy about much serving, who stood and said: Lord, hast thou no care that my sister hath left me alone to serve? Speak to her therefore that she help me. And the Lord answering, said to her: Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and art troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen

the best part, which shall not be taken away from her." Of such importance is eternal life that all things should be despised, if it be required to do so to secure it! As the place where these good women lived was on Mount Olivet, facing Jerusalem, and commanding a view of the temple, the disciples asked their Divine Master to give them a form of prayer, as John the Baptist had given to his followers. Jesus condescended to do so, and after recommending solitude and recollection, He again taught them the Our Father, which He had already inculcated in the Sermon on the Mount; and to convince them the more of the efficacy of prayer, He proposed to them this simile: "Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight, and shall say to him: Friend, lend me three loaves, because a friend of mine has come off his journey to me, and I have not what to set before him. And he from within shall answer and say: Trouble me not, the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed: I cannot rise and give thee. Yet if he shall continue knocking, I say to you, although he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend; yet because of his importunity he will rise, and give him as many as he needeth. And I say to you, ask and it shall be given you: seek and you shall find: knock and it shall be opened to you. For everyone that asketh, receiveth: and he that seeketh, findeth: and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. And which of you if he ask his father bread, will He give him a stone? Or a fish, will He for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will He reach him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the Good Spirit to them that ask Him? . . . Sell what you possess and give alms. Make to yourselves bags which grow not old, a treasure in heaven which fadeth not: where no thief approacheth,

nor moth corrupteth." And a certain woman hearing his heavenly maxims, raised her voice in the crowd, and said: "Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the paps that gave Thee suck." "Yea, rather," answered Jesus, "blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it." And another person, scared on the contrary at the purity and sanctity of His doctrine, remarked that very few should be saved, and our Saviour answered and told him to try to be among the few.

In spite of the love and generosity with which Jesus shed His favours in all directions; in spite of the zeal with which He laboured for souls, his enemies, who were those whose morals were in opposition to the teaching of the Redeemer, ceased not to plot against His life. He had not even left Jerusalem when some of the Pharisees said to Him: "Depart and get thee hence for Herod hath a mind to kill Thee." Jesus, who knew their wicked intentions, desiring to show them that everything was foreseen and ordained by Divine Providence answered them thus: "Go and tell that fox, behold I cast out devils, and do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I am consummated." And then He exclaimed: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent to Thee, how often would I have gathered thy children as the bird doth her brood under her wings, and thou wouldst not!" By this He foretold the ruin of the holy city in punishment of her hardness of heart. In the same chapter He was told how Pilate mingled the blood of some Galileans with their sacrifices; and He answered: "Think you that these Galileans were sinners above all the men of Galilee, because they suffered such things? No, I say to you; but unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish." And He confirmed this threat with the following parable: "A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it, and



found none. And he said to the dresser of the vineyard : Behold, for these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and I find none. Cut it down therefore ; why cumbereth it the ground ? But he answering, said to him : Lord, let it alone this year also, until I dig about it, and dung it : and if haply it bear fruit : but if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." Such shall be the fate of those who content themselves with neither robbing nor murdering, but never bring forth the fruit of good works.

On His return from Jerusalem, He went to Capharnaum, and when dining one Sabbath day in the house of a Pharisee, He cured, without any objection, a man ill of the palsy, and availed Himself of this opportunity to ridicule the prejudices of those who condemned the doing of works of mercy on the festival days. He besides recommended humility, repeating that famous maxim : " He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." He also exhorted the rich to be generous to the poor, and above all to those who cannot recompense them in this world, for so their heavenly Father will make restitution of all in the resurrection of the just. To the Pharisees who murmured because He dined and mixed with publicans and sinners, He repeated for the purpose of gaining them for heaven, the parable of the shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine sheep to go in quest of the one which had strayed away ; and concluded with the tender description of the prodigal son, the image of a poor sinner, saying : " A certain man had two sons, and the younger of them said to his father : Father, give me the portion of substance that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his substance. And not many days after, the younger son, gathering all together, went abroad into a far country : and there wasted his substance, living riotously. And after he had spent all, there came a mighty famine in that country, and he

began to be in want. And he went, and cleaved to one of the citizens of that country. And he sent him into his farm to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat : and no man gave unto him. And returning to himself, he said : How many hired servants in my father's house abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger ? I will arise, and will go to my father, and say to him : Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee : I am not worthy to be called thy son : make me as one of thy hired servants. And rising up he came to his father. And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and running to him fell upon his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him ; Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee ; I am not now worthy to be called thy son. And the father said to his servants : Bring forth quickly the first robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and make merry : because this my son was dead, and is come to life again ; was lost and is found. And they began to be merry. Now the elder son was in the field, and when he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said to him : Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe. And he was angry, and would not go in. His father, therefore, coming out began to entreat him. And he, answering, said to his father : Behold, for so many years do I serve thee, and I have never transgressed thy commandment, and yet thou hast never given me a kid to make merry with my friends. But as soon as this thy son is come, who hath devoured his substance . . . thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. But he said to him : Son, thou art always with me, and



all I have is thine. But it was fit that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead, and is come to life again ; he was lost and is found." Such is the anxiety with which God awaits the conversion of a sinner, that when it occurs there are joyful feasts celebrated in the kingdom of glory. But at the same time to show how He appreciated innocence, Our Lord embraced with no less tenderness some little children, and blessed them by imposing His hands on them. On a certain occasion when the disciples were trying to prevent those tender creatures from approaching Him, Jesus took it ill, and told them to allow the little ones to come to Him, and not attempt to prevent them, for of such was the kingdom of heaven. Yes, they are like the elder brothers of the prodigals, and always live by the side of their loving father.

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ANNA OF SEVILLE.

# LIGHT FROM THE LOWLY.

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## Series IX.

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### ST. GUY, SACRISTAN.

#### I.

ST. GUY, commonly called the poor man of Anderlecht, was born in the country, near Brussels, of mean parents, but both very virtuous, and consequently content and happy in their station. They were not able to give their son a school education, nor did they on that account repine, but redoubled their diligence in instructing him early in the rudiments of the Christian doctrine, and in all the maxims of our holy religion, often repeating to him the lesson which old Tobias gave his son: "We shall be rich enough if we fear God." But their own example was the most powerful, constant instruction, and inspired him more strongly than words could do with the Christian spirit of humility, meekness and piety, and with a fear of God, animated by clarity, which is fruitful in all manner of good works. Guy was from his cradle serious, obedient, mild, patient, docile, and an

enemy to the least sloth. He conceived the highest sense of all religious duties, and was inured, both by his parents' care and by his own fervour, to the practice of them. The meanness of his condition much delighted him as soon as he was of an age to know its value. He rejoiced to see himself placed in a state which Christ had chosen for Himself. This conformity to his Divine Master, who lived and died in extreme poverty, and the humiliation inseparable from his condition, were very pleasing to him, and it was his chief care to make use of the advantages it afforded him for the exercise of all heroic virtues. He showed to the rich and the great ones of the world all possible respect, but never envied or coveted their fortunes, and sighed sincerely to see men in all states so eagerly wedded to the goods of the earth, which they so much overrate. When he met with poor persons who grieved to see themselves such, he exhorted them not to lose by murmuring, impatience, and unprofitable desires, the treasures which God put into their hands. The painful labour, hardships, inconveniences, and humiliations to which his condition exposed him he looked upon as its most precious advantages, being sensible that the poverty which the Redeemer chose was not such a one as even worldlings would desire, abounding with all the necessities and comforts of life, but a poverty which is accompanied by continual privations, sufferings, and denials of the gratification of the senses. The great curse which Christ denounces against riches regards the inordinate pleasure that is sought in the abundance of earthly goods, and in the delights of sense.

St. Austin says that God ranks among the reprobate, not only those who shall have received their comfort on earth, but also those who shall have grieved to be deprived of it. This was the misfortune which Guy dreaded. In order to preserve himself from it, he never ceased to beg

of God the grace to love the happy state of poverty in which Divine Providence had placed him, and to bear all its hardships with joy and perfect resignation, in a spirit of penance, without which all the tribulations of the world are of no advantage for heaven. His heart used to burn when he heard of the deeds of the solitary followers of an Arsenius, or an Anthony, who dedicated themselves to the cultivation of all virtues. He grieved that he did not live in those times, and now found himself without direction or rule for leading such a life. But the Lord accepts and rewards good wishes, when acts are impossible: and as Guy did not drop his plans and desires of a solitary life, he was daily purifying himself more and more from all earthly affection, in order, as far as he was concerned, to oppose no obstacle to the fulfilment of his aspirations. The Lord took compassion on him, and at last put him in the way of realising his intentions.

About half a mile from Brussels, in a village called Laken, there is a sanctuary consecrated to the Blessed Virgin, celebrated for the miracles with which the Lord blesses the followers of the Immaculate Queen. Guy, having heard of the wonders which the sovereign Empress of heaven wrought in this holy temple, went on a pilgrimage to it, to implore the protection of his loving Mother. The priest in charge of the church was struck by the modesty, devotion, and pious bearing of the servant of God, and invited him to take charge of the sanctuary in the capacity of sacristan. Guy was delighted with the proposal, and did not allow such a chance to escape of imitating the habits of the solitaries of the desert. His business was to sweep the church, dress the altars, fold up the vestments, take care of the linen and other movables used in the service of God, ring the bell for Mass and vespers, and provide flowers and other decorations which were used in the church: all which he

performed with the utmost exactness and veneration, which the most profound sense of religion can inspire. The neatness and good order that appeared in everything under his direction edified all that came to that church; for, out of a true spirit of religion, the servant of God looked upon nothing as small which belonged to the service of the Lord, or to the decency of his house. His religious silence, modesty, and recollection in the church seemed to say to others, "This is the house of God: tremble you that approach His sanctuary." During his employments, he walked always in the divine presence, praying in his heart. When they were done, he refreshed his soul at the foot of the altar in fervent exercises of devotion; and often passed whole nights in prayer. He chastised his body by rigorous fasts, and endeavoured, by constant compunction and the severity of his penance, to appease the anger of his Judge at the last day. Had it been reasonable to form a judgment of the enormity of his sins by the humble sentiments he entertained of himself, and by the penitential tears he shed, he would have passed for the most grievous sinner on the face of the earth; whereas, the sins he so grievously bewailed were only the lightest faults of inadvertence, such as the just fall into, and which only his great purity of heart could have discerned, and magnified in his eyes. To wipe away those daily stains (through the merits of Christ's passion applied to his soul) he lived in constant compunction, learning every day to become more watchful over himself in all his words and actions, and in all the motions of his heart. By humility and meekness he was sweet and courteous to all, showing that true virtue is amiable to men, and that nothing so much civilises the human soul. Out of his small salary he found a great deal for the poor; and for their sake he always lived himself in the greatest poverty, and often begged to procure them relief. He bitterly bewailed his slightest

faults, and frequently wept over his lightest stains at the feet of Christ's minister. The sole thought that there could be anyone in the world so hardened as to peacefully go to bed in sin, not knowing whether he should awake in the morning, horrified him, and he besought the Lord to take away his life sooner than allow such a misfortune to befall him. His frequent prayer contributed to increase this aversion to everything which had the appearance of sin. He never began any task of importance without prayer. During the day, when at his work, whether in the church or in his own house, he frequently raised his heart to God in pious ejaculations, the fruit of long hours of meditation, in which he sometimes spent whole nights before the Blessed Sacrament, or some statue of the Blessed Virgin.

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## II.

As his employment did not give him sufficient work, it is believed that he laboured a portion of the day on a neighbouring farm. It is certain that either at this time or previously he was employed at farm work, as a well-grounded tradition testifies. Whilst thus engaged he used to leave his plough sometimes, in order to carry food to his indigent parents. This was reported to his master, who was not pleased at it, and lay in wait to detect him in the act. Guy went as usual, but the master was astonished to see a handsome youth take his place and continue his work.

The enemy of the human race was jealous of the progress which Guy was making in virtue under the protection of Mary, as also of the fervour which his example communicated to the faithful who frequented the temple.

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He several times tried to induce him to abandon his quiet solitary life, but his efforts were frustrated by the saint's humility and fervent prayer. Transforming himself into an angel of light he made a supreme attack under the guise of virtue and mercy. For this purpose he availed himself of a merchant of Brussels, who had gone to visit the sanctuary, and been received by Guy with his usual affability and sweetness. He took pity on the diligent sacristan, who was clothed almost in rags and sunk in misery. He told him that if he liked to embark in trade he would supply him with the necessary means to gain a livelihood and earn plenty to distribute to the poor of Jesus Christ. The merchant could not touch a chord more suited to his purpose, or likely to move the saint's compassionate heart. It is true, the pious sacristan regretted leaving that pleasant retreat, and saying farewell to that house of Mary, in which he had received so many graces from her hand; but moved by the reasons put before him by his innocent tempter, or the seductive prospect of being able to abundantly help the poor, he fell into the snares laid by the common enemy to hurl him into the abyss hidden behind the pleasing panorama.

All positions and all states do not equally suit all. Some are sanctified as merchants who would be damned as magistrates; others become perfect in a religious life who would perish in the bustle of the world. Hence the devil, who knows well the supreme importance of selecting that state in which God wishes us to work out our eternal salvation, took such pains to withdraw Guy from his beloved solitude, and ceased not till he succeeded. Our sacristan, then, bade adieu, not without tears, to the church of the Virgin, where he had made remarkable progress in perfection. May she protect and guard him according to his prayer.

Our two travellers had embarked on the Seine; the

rowers were at work, when the Lord, who penetrated the charitable intentions of the young merchant, was pleased to impede his journey, and bring him again to the service of His august Mother. Everything augured a prosperous voyage to the two merchants: the weather was beautiful, the sky clear, the wind fair, the river calm, the rowers experienced; but God, who disposes everything for His glory and the good of our souls, frustrated their pleasing anticipations: almost at the start the boat ran on a shoal, leaving them almost high and dry on the sand, and all their efforts could not get her off. Our saint, like the other passengers, lent a hand, but his fingers swelled so that he could not touch a rope. Then, illuminated by a ray of divine grace, he knew that he was the Jonas of the misfortune, and he promised to the Blessed Virgin to return to the service of her sanctuary, once freed from his present difficulty. Our Lady heard his vow, and our sacristan delayed not in its fulfilment, bitterly repenting his imprudence and its rashness.

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### III.

Prostrated again before the altar of the sovereign Queen, he returned her thanks for liberating him from the snares of Lucifer; and as if his inconstancy had been a great crime, he revenged his fickleness on his body, and gave himself to prayer and humility with greater fervour than ever, that he might not fall again into the toils of the enemy. But this did not make him neglect his duties, for, on the contrary, he kept the house of God with all the cleanliness and decency which become a sacred edifice. In his poverty and lowly office the saint lived in greater peace and happiness than the

highest princes on earth. And, indeed, if anyone can be reputed truly happy in this valley of thorns, it is not certainly the man who is wading in riches, honours, and pleasures, and struggles to smother the gnawing worm of conscience, but he, and only he, who by obeying the divine will has well-grounded hopes of attaining the eternal kingdom of glory. Our sacristan endeavoured to cherish this hope in his soul by an exact observance of the divine law, and a prompt correspondence to the inspirations of heaven.

Guy was now far advanced in age and merits, when the Father of Mercies gave him a desire to undertake a pilgrimage to the holy places, as was usual at that time among pious people. He visited the shrines of the princes of the Apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, of the glorious patron of Spain, St. James, and the holy places sanctified by our Redeemer; and in these journeys he spent seven years of hardship and privations.

At the end of this time he was completely unknown. With his long beard, his entangled hair, and his body attenuated by hunger and fatigue, always borne for God's sake, he was like a skeleton come forth from the tomb. Wondulf, the Dean of Anderlech, and some companions, had undertaken the pilgrimage to the Holy Land at this time. On the road they met with an unknown man, who addressed them by name. In wonder they asked him who he was, and finding he was the former sacristan of Laken, they were agreeably surprised, and asked him to return with them to Jerusalem as their guide and interpreter. Guy, who wished to be of service to all, interrupted his journey, and returned with the new pilgrims to the Holy Land, which they reached after running many risks by sea and land. Guy was the servant of all, and performed his duties with the utmost care. All, with the exception of our saint, whom God preserved to attend them like a tender mother, died in Judea.

Before expiring, Wondulf called the servant of God to his side, and giving him a gold ring, said to him: "My last hour is come; when you return home tell my friends and acquaintances what happened me, and in testimony of your truthfulness show them this ring." After saying this, Wondulf raised his eyes and hands to heaven and breathed forth his spirit, leaving behind unequivocal signs of his predestination. Our pilgrim, after performing the last offices for their remains, returned home to announce the sad tidings of their death.

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#### IV.

The fatigues of the journey told on his attenuated body, and he had scarcely arrived home when he was attacked by an issue of blood. He took up his lodging in the house of a poor family, and related to them his adventures and the death of Wondulf, the Dean of Anderlech. When the news reached the ears of Wondulf's vicar, he went at once to see Guy, who, after describing his companion's departure from this world, showed him the ring the dean had given him before he died. The vicar took the servant of God home, where he bestowed on him all the care he needed. Guy had now filled up the measure of his deserts, and being prepared for the heavenly Jerusalem, the Lord called him to receive the reward of his labours on Palm Sunday night. During his agony, or sweet sleep, the bystanders saw a golden dove descend from heaven, which rested beside the sufferer, and disappeared when he breathed his last. The year of his death is uncertain, but was probably 1020. He was honourably buried in Anderlech, where later on the inhabitants, moved thereto by the many miracles by which the Lord proclaimed the glory of his servant, erected a church under his invocation.

## BLESSED WILLIAM, BAKER.

## I.

THIS blessed servant of God came to the world about the end of the 12th century, to teach us, by his example, that there is no true peace for him who nourishes in his heart the viper of sin. William was a native of Brabant, and was the son of parents of the middle class. He had scarcely passed his childhood, when he gave loose rein to his passions, and sank into an abyss of infamy and degradation. No advice or warning had any effect on his corrupted heart, the prey of vice before it knew the beauty of virtue. Steadfast in his evil ways, he surpassed all his loose companions in wickedness and the refinement of his extravagances, and like an experienced master instructed them in vice. Thus did he grow up like a crooked and diseased plant, which his parents took very little pains to straighten and put right, to the risk of gathering from it nothing but thorns. However, that he might not be left without some means of earning a living, they apprenticed him to a baker. When slightly instructed in his trade, he began to think of making his parents some return for the care they took in rearing him. Foolishly looking on himself as perfect in his business, he could no longer endure the slight subjection he had to suffer at home; and promising himself ample riches with which to give loose rein to his disordered appetites, he abandoned his family and went to strange lands in search of the wealth he dreamt of.

How many, guided by like sentiments, have miserably

died in a hospital, the prey of remorse! To this had our saint been exposed only for the infinite mercy of the Lord. Nowhere did he find ease, peace, or rest. He spent in one place on vice what he earned in another by his toil. At last he went to France, believing he should there find the prosperity he sought, as soon as he should understand the language of that country. But here the same thing happened him as in all parts: unrest and bitterness persecuted him night and day. How could he be happy when he nourished in his bosom a degree of vice not only capable of eating up his moderate earnings, but even a large capital? God sent him warnings, and he obstinately refused to attend to them. At last he found a place of rest and peace after a long career of unhappiness, for the Lord brought him to a convent of Premonstratensians at a place called Tenville, in the province of Lyons. Here, while working at his trade, which had been the means of introducing him to those religious, he learned from experience that not only can sanctity be acquired in all professions, but that the yoke of the Lord is sweet to those artisans who are content with their pay, and seek before all the kingdom of eternal glory.

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## II.

William felt all this in that short, lucid interval. There in the shadow of that silent and holy dwelling, engaged at his trade and the duties of a good Christian, he enjoyed a sweetness and peace he had never before experienced, and which one seeks in vain outside the divine service, though he might be swimming in a sea of earthly delights. We might say that the servant of God had now laid the foundations to become a holy baker; all

that he wanted was to persevere, and persevere belongs to but few. The enemy, who never sleeps, is constantly laying snares for our destruction, regretting the loss of a recruit, who had so willingly obeyed infernal maxims. He consequently redoubled his efforts to recover his prey, and laid his plans to withdraw from port and launch him again on the tempestuous sea of this muddy world. The unhappy man fell into the trap; deceiving himself with the pernicious pride that he was yet young, and that youth was the time of enjoyment, as if youth were beyond the range of care, and were not obliged to gain the crown of glory by manfully struggling against the current of the world and its corrupt doctrines.

William again became the slave of carnal pleasures and again lost the peace and the liberty of the children of God. Although when he remembered the sweet comfort of a good conscience, which his angel guardian frequently brought to his mind, he could not do less than frequently bewail the loss of so desirable a blessing, yet blind to his passions he drifted, like a ship without rudder, farther and farther from the port of peace. An extraordinary light was needed to dissipate that dense mist, and save him from shipwreck; and the Lord, who wills not the death of a sinner, but that he be converted and live, shined upon him this extraordinary light. Fatigued by his temptations, he fell asleep on a certain occasion, completely forgetting his eternal salvation. Then the Angel of the Lord appeared to him and showed him the foulness of his heart, made blacker than a devil by sin, and pointed to him the mouth of hell vomiting out flames at him, and ready to swallow him for ever, if he did not promptly change his life, and try in solitude to wash away his stains. The baker awoke in alarm, uncertain whether it was reality or a dream, but at the same time dreaded the eternal and atrocious torments which awaited

if he abandoned not his evil ways. In the midst of this perplexity, inclining now to one side, now to another, according to the strength of the enemy's temptations, the celestial messenger again appeared to him and repeated his order, indicating the place where he should satisfy for his sins, and wash out the stain he had brought on his honourable trade. At the third warning William obeyed, resolved to follow at all hazards the voice of that loving Father who offered him pardon, and was waiting for him with open arms, prepared to give him the kiss of peace.

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### III.

When he reached the place indicated to him, the first thing he did was to cleanse his soul from sin by a sincere confession, without which all his penances, how severe soever, would have been useless. For this purpose he went to the priest of the place, who at sight of that body, deformed and haggard through vice, was afraid of him. Overcome at last by the tears and entreaties of the penitent, he heard him with kindness, and gave him the desired pardon of his sins and permission to exercise himself in penance within his jurisdiction. With the blessing of the minister of Jesus Christ, peace again sprung up in his agitated heart. Tears of satisfaction and joy spontaneously flowed from his eyes, and he knew not how to thank the Lord for the mercy He had shown him. The place marked out for the penitent was charming, adorned with trees and running streams, reminding him, as it were, that all should be despised, no matter how pleasant or magnificent it may appear, when there is question of gaining the kingdom of glory. Bewailing his errors, and thinking of how to remedy them,



William resolved to creep on the earth, instead of walking, in punishment of the abuse he had made of his faculties and senses. "O my God!" he sometimes exclaimed, "I am unworthy to look up to heaven, my true country! And as I so often sold it for the momentary pleasure of impure beasts, it is only right that I should walk like them with my eyes fixed on the earth, which will soon devour my body, so often pampered to the great injury of my sweet Jesus." And he carried out his resolution, and in this way searched for food, which consisted of fruit and wild herbs. Occupied the greater part of the day in prayer and meditation on divine truths, he only remembered the world to detest its pernicious doctrines, or bewail the malice of the offences offered to the God of mercy. Soon the rumour of the penitent's strange mode of life spread through the neighbouring villages, and many went to visit him out of curiosity. Different judgments were formed of him, according to the different sentiments of those forming them: some looked on him as mad, others as a refined hypocrite, and very few discovered in his way of living the strange roads by which God conducts his saints to eternal victory. At last a few pious men, taking compassion on him, built him a hut to protect him from the inclemency of the weather, but made him carry the materials on his back, like a beast of burden.

As the fame of his sanctity spread, the numbers who went to see him increased, among them being Master John de Nivella, Canon of Oñiac, a man distinguished in learning and virtue. Having sounded the penitent, he was at once convinced of the good spirit which animated him; but anxious to place him in a path less exposed to illusions, he gave him some rules for his spiritual government, and advised him to give up that mode of living, and walk like other rational beings; that as God had made us erect in order that our eyes might be fixed

on heaven, where our real treasure is, he might not doubt that its contemplation would assist him to persevere in the observance of the divine commandments. William listened with humility and thanks to the counsels of the virtuous canon, and resolved to put them in practice at once.

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## IV.

It providentially happened that Bertha, the widow of Eustachius, landlord of the place, admiring the virtue of the penitent baker, and anxious that he should fix his residence in the neighbourhood, gave him a piece of rough ground to break in and cultivate at his pleasure. The servant of God accepted the offer, and henceforth spent the day partly in prayer and the exercises of piety, partly in the cultivation of the land, and partly in the study of the Sacred Scriptures, in the perusal of which he found inexplicable consolation. But it may be said that neither study nor labour interrupted his prayer, for he began no work without offering it to the glory of God, nor became so absorbed in it that he did not occasionally offer to the Almighty a sacrifice of praise with frequent and fervent ejaculations which came from his heart inflamed with the love of God. The Lord also proved him by means of false brethren. A few, desirous of imitating him and living with him for mutual improvement in the divine service, joined him in his mode of life; but among them were not wanting some, who, not content with looking back, caused the holy penitent no little suffering. William endured it all as justly due to his sins, and failed not to do all the good he could, even to those who maltreated him. The good widow greatly rejoiced when she saw the wonderful reformation

wrought in her tenants and the other inhabitants of the place by the penitent's good example. Not content with these pleasing conquests, the hermit resolved to raise a temple to the Lord, and succeeded in carrying out his purpose.

In this holy house the good baker spent long hours blessing the Lord who had proved Himself so liberal to a creature so ungrateful. But the devil, always envious of the glory of God and the salvation of souls, tried, but in vain, every means to win him over. Incontinence was the flank on which he made the rudest onsets, and even when praying in the house of God he placed before his eyes tempting objects to distract him. But William knew the enemy's tricks, and arming himself with the sign of the cross, he would prepare for the struggle, and ever gained the palm of victory. He suffered greatly from these attacks of lasciviousness; but, fortified by prayer and mortification, the only sure arms in contests of this kind, he fearlessly encountered the attacks of hell. He knew that no matter how foul his thoughts might be, if he did not entertain them, but tried to banish them, far from offending God, he rather increased his crown; for it is certain that where there is no will there is no sin. And so, after resisting as God inspired him, he felt tranquil and secure in the path of the just. There were times when in the heart of winter he threw himself into a freezing river to extinguish the flames of lust. At last the vile and infernal spirits, seeing they made no progress, but rather increased the penitent's merits, would retire crestfallen, and give him long spells of rest. In these contests the Lord comforted him with special favours, in which He showed him the glory of Thabor, as a foretaste of the delights He had prepared for him in heaven.

As he had by his virtuous application made notable progress in the study of the Sacred Scriptures, God

inspired him to become a priest. William obeyed the divine call, though alarmed at the dignity about being conferred on him, and the Most Rev. John de Bethunia Bishop of Cambray, willingly ordained him. When now adorned with the sacerdotal character, he renovated the temple which he had built, and gave the place to some fervent Cistercian nuns, that the Lord might be perpetually adored where he had received such ineffable graces from His generous hand. The monastery was installed, to the priest's great joy, under the title of St. Mary of Oliba. William was a father to those devout religious : he inflamed them by his example, he consoled them in their afflictions, he provided them with what they needed, the Lord sometimes miraculously procuring it for him. The servant of God was bound by the links of charity to the venerable Mary, Abbess of Oñiach, who appeared to him after death, gloriously refulgent as the sun, and clothed in a rich garment studded with flowers of gold, as a sign of the reward she was going to receive. William's last hour also came ; and after many and painful attacks, which he bore with Christian resignation, after strongly recommending to his nuns humility, charity, purity, discipline, and piety, he departed from this exile and went to a better life in 1244, at the age of sixty-six, leaving us undeniable proofs of how deceitful the world is, which promised him pleasure, but robbed him of peace and glory, which he had afterwards to recover by penance, the only plank of salvation for those who suffer shipwreck from sin.

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## VENERABLE JOHN, MERCHANT AND MARTYR.

## I.

OUR Catholic provinces had much to suffer under the dominion of the Saracens, but none more than Andalusia, where the disciples of Jesus Christ were severely oppressed by the children of Islam. A proof of this is what happened in Cordova, our saint's native place, in the reign of Abderramen II., a vain, wealthy, proud, barbarous and superstitious monarch. The Mahomedans, following their king's example, regarded the Christians as worms and not men, the filth of the earth, and the offscourings of the people. When they met our worthy priests on the streets, they assailed them with abusive language, and sometimes went so far as to stone them. When they heard the bells ring, they uttered shouts of derision, vomited forth blasphemies against Jesus Christ, and mocked the sacred ceremonies. When a Catholic funeral occurred, both priests and people accompanying it were insulted. Only the meekness taught by Jesus Christ could give them strength to bear silently and patiently so many outrages.

And this was not the worst, for they treacherously laid snares for innocent men, who were prominent for their learning or influence, to take away their life under the forms of justice. Our merchant was one of the victims of these frauds. Rich and generous, he was the support of the poor Christians in their straits and necessities. As Father Martin de Roa relates, his wealth no less than his zeal for the good of Catholicity, excited the envy and hatred of the Moors, who left no stone un-

turned to ruin him and take possession of his property. Putting themselves in his way, these depraved men thus laid a snare for him to sacrifice him to their spirit of vengeance, "We are aware," they said to him, "that in your dealings, to make your contracts more binding, you swear by Mahomet, to the injury of the prophet, that strangers, not knowing whether you are a Moor or a Christian, may take you for the former; and you not only deceive them, but make a mockery of the oath sworn by Mahomet." The secular faithful, it appears, dressed like the Mahomedans, for which reason they accused John of abusing the ignorance of his customers, and by his perjury making them believe that he was a Moor; but these envious and wicked men, blinded by their avarice and their hatred to Catholicity, did not see that for a Catholic, placed in our merchant's circumstances, to swear by the false prophet would be a grievous sin; for an oath being an act of religion, it would have been to offer worship to a vain god for a vile profit or to conceal his faith, which requires an external and unequivocal confession. Hence the confessor of Jesus Christ indignantly denied the accusation. The Moors loudly and furiously answered that it was true; and as they persisted in provoking him to anger, the saint disdainfully answered: "May God's curse fall on anyone who takes your prophet's name in his mouth."

The enemies of the Christian name and our enslaved country desired no more. As soon as the saint uttered the words they surrounded him, and clamorously kicked and abused him, and carried him half dead before the judge. Here they renewed their unjust accusation, saying: "We have found that this Christian merchant mocks at our prophet, frequently curses him, and, what is worse, in his dealings deceives everyone by perjury committed in the name of Mahomet." The judge did not venture to condemn him to death for want of proof.

However, he himself questioned the saint on the point. The invincible confessor, whilst acknowledging that unfortunately many were guilty of such offences, said that though he had no respect or reverence for Mahomet, he must yet deny the imputation which the avarice or hatred of his enemies made against him. He repeated that he never did or said what they falsely accused him of, and that on no account would he cease to believe in, hope in, reverence, adore, and love Jesus Christ to the point of laying down his life for him. Such was the resolution and constancy displayed by the Spanish Catholics of all ages and conditions, condemned to live among those cruel enemies of Catholicity.

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## II.

In spite of these protestations the barbarous judge, to prove the martyr's virtue, offered him great wealth if he would renounce his faith, and threatened him with severe punishment if he did not; but he, renouncing all earthly advantages, preferred to gain heaven by despising them. He was immediately most unjustly condemned to five hundred lashes to compel him to renounce Jesus Christ. The sentence was so cruelly carried out, that his flesh was torn into shreds, and he fell almost lifeless at the feet of his executioners. In this state they put him on an ass, and paraded him through all the streets and churches of Cordova. The saint suffered these bitter torments and affronts with admirable serenity and patience, animated by the recollection of all that Jesus endured for love of us, and the hope of the reward promised to those who fight the good fight to the end. A crier accompanied the procession proclaiming that such punishment was deserved by those who

spoke ill of their prophet. The rabble, and particularly the Moorish rabble, always a stupid admirer of such spectacles, cried out that the punishment was too light for one guilty of so heinous an offence.

After this they confined him in irons in a dark prison to expiate his supposed crime. Such is the justice of those who hate Catholicity. There he remained a long time suffering from his wounds, so that when, some months after, the holy doctor, Eulogius, saw him, he found him covered with sores. We know not what new punishment they may have subjected him to, but we do know that in spite of threats and promises the saint continued firm in the service of Jesus Christ. At last, after many days of imprisonment, he rested in peace, full of deserts. The day of his death is not known, but Father Roa places it on the 30th of April, 851, and Dr. D. Bartholomew Sanchez, on the 21st of August. Be this as it may, what is certain is, according to the archpriest Cyprian, that the Catholics immediately venerated him as a saint. The Church, however, does not recite his office, nor has she enrolled him in her martyrology, and hence is given to him only a pious veneration.



## ST. NOTBURGA, COOK.

### I.

ON the slope of a high mountain overlooking the valley of Yenbach, celebrated in the Tyrol for its silver and copper mines, stands a ridge from which is beheld the beautiful panorama of the vale of Rattemberg, watered

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by the Yun, and surrounded by feudal castles, on which we meet with a holy temple, which contains the relics of the glorious St. Notburga. Thither flock annually innumerable miners to pay respect to the saint and venerate the holy places, which were the theatre of her persecution and triumph.

Notburga was the daughter of a hatter of Rattemberg, a fervent Christian, who by the virtues proper to his state ennobled his daughter, born to him in the year 1267. In the eighteen years she lived under the care and vigilance of her family our heroine cast such deep roots of piety to God, and mercy to the poor, that neither prosperity nor misfortune could eradicate them from her heart. At that age she went, with her father's blessing, to serve as cook in the palace of Don Henry, baron of Rattemberg, who was married to a noble matron named Gutta.

They lived in a castle not far from the town, which belonged to them. In this situation, Notburga gained the affection of her employers, not only by her exquisite taste in the performance of her duties, but also by her modesty, humility, and prompt obedience to all their commands. Ever active and diligent, she daily, with her employers' permission, collected the poor who came to the palace, and after saying a kind word or giving them a warning for their spiritual good, charitably divided among them the fragments of the day. She was never idle, unless when engaged in hearing Mass or saying her prayers, and for this purpose she rose very early, and she kept everything clean and neat that nothing might go to loss through her fault. But she was never so occupied at her duties that she was unable, let her be cooking, or sewing, or knitting, to raise her heart to God, to whose glory she offered all she did. On the contrary her very surroundings appeared to invite her to meditate on the eternal truths and raise her mind to the Lord, the

centre of all her aspirations. The fire reminded her of the inextinguishable fire of hell ; the variety of meats brought to her recollection the ineffable joys of glory ; the hard and insipid food rendered soft and palatable by the fire, represented to her the power of mortification to conquer the hardness of self-love ; the coals, converted by the flames into a brilliant mass, symbolised the beauty of a heart etherealised by the flame of divine love. In this way she daily became more charitable and kind to men, and more fervent and solicitous in serving God in all her actions. Her employers were delighted with her, and through her good example the house appeared the dwelling of peace, where the breath of envy or slander was never felt, nor that anxiety for material enjoyment so common in persons of their rank. There was a cloud, however, in the distance, which presaged a coming tempest.

In the house with the old couple lived Henry, their heir, and his wife Otilia. Otilia was avaricious and haughty, and never could look favourably on Notburga's liberality. She held her tongue, however, through respect for the old people, and bided her time to be revenged on the charitable cook. Six years after she entered their service, Notburga's employers died, and the new mistress ordered her to throw the fragments of the kitchen to the pigs. The humble cook obeyed, but it pained her to do so, and when alone she shed bitter tears because she was unable to assist the poor as usual. However, in order to have something to give to those most in need, she fasted on bread and water herself, and distributed her own share to them. She did so particularly on Fridays, in honour of the passion of her beloved Jesus. This innocent and heroic liberality of the cook wounded her mistress, and excited her anger against the innocent girl, who bore her upbraidings and ill-temper with the patience of a saint. But her humility and



mortification, far from soothing the hard-hearted Otilia, only infuriated her the more against the kind-hearted Notburga. She allowed no occasion to pass of prejudicing her husband against her innocent servant, telling him she was bringing a troop of dissipated ragamuffins about the place, who some day or other would surely rob them. Such was the antipathy she had to poor Notburga that she hated the very sight of her, and was anxious to get rid of her as soon as possible. She had not to wait long to see her desires fulfilled.


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## II.

When Henry was one day returning from the prince's place, where his position gave him a right to attend, he met his servant, and seeing her carrying a basket he asked her what she had in it; she told him truly it was her dinner, which she was taking to the poor. He asked to see it, and on opening it found nothing but chips. The Lord wished to thus confound the nobleman's pride. He was annoyed at the trick he thought his servant had played him, and told the story to his wife, and instead of admiring the innocence of the girl they resolved to dismiss her at once. Otilia was delighted at the triumph she had gained. "There is the big saint for you," said she, on meeting Notburga; "you would think butter would not melt in her mouth, and yet she could make a fool of my husband. I can stand it no longer, Notburga: you did not correspond to our kindness, so go and look for another place, for you are wanted here no longer." In silence and humility did the saint hear her invectives, interiorly rejoicing at suffering something for Jesus, and firmly trusting that God would not desert her even if all the world abandoned

her. Nor was she vexed at being dismissed, for she was a long time expecting such a thing. God has ever been the shield of the just, and never deserts them in their necessities; and if occasionally He appears to hide His face, it is only to increase their reward. Honourable and noble families opened their doors to the servant of God; but she preferred, tired as she was of the whims of the rich, to take service with a rustic farmer rather than enjoy the comforts of a palace.

She consequently came to an agreement with a farmer, of Eben, on the other side of the Yun, stipulating in her contract that on all feast days she should be free from the evening before to mind her prayers and her exercises of piety. What a lesson for many girls who, instead of making like conditions in their bargains, require permission to attend meetings and reunions, where their honour, their fortune, and their eternal felicity run a great risk! Like the foolish virgins they neglect to provide their lamps with oil, and expose themselves to be cast into eternal darkness by their criminal negligence. Notburga understood this well; she knew that the diversions and pleasures of this world, far from satisfying the heart of man, leave it completely void, whilst virtue, the exercises of piety, and works of mercy fill the soul with ineffable peace and consolation, the prelude of the joys of glory. Hence she asked for liberty for virtue and not for vice; for liberty to sin is not liberty but license, and the most degrading slavery. She had made her arrangements with the farmer, and was gathering up her things to bid a friendly good-bye to her employers, when Otilia fell seriously ill, as if in punishment of her fault. There was here a splendid occasion for our cook to show her resentment, but the saints have no bitterness except for themselves, and so she remained to attend the poor patient, whom she nursed with unequalled charity and



solicitude, caring her day and night, as if she had been her greatest benefactor. Forgetting the past, she only saw in her mistress the image of Jesus Christ, and all her toil for His glory appeared insignificant. The first thing she did was to prepare the patient to die like a good Christian, by receiving the sacraments. She did not leave her side till, consoled by the good maxims of her servant, she delivered up her soul to her Creator, trusting in the infinite goodness of the Lord. When this work of mercy was ended, Notburga went to her new master, according to her agreement. It is needless to say that here, as in the palace, she sanctified her soul by prayer and labour, mortification and alms. Near the house there was a chapel dedicated to St. Rupert, in which there was a venerable image of the Blessed Virgin. Hither she would retire after her work and spend the greater part of her leisure time in prayer to the holy Virgin, to her no small spiritual consolation and advancement; and here also she unbosomed herself in her afflictions.


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### III.

His servant had scarcely left the Baron of Rottemberg's palace when the Lord severely afflicted its unjust inhabitants. Every night a ghost came to disturb their repose; it grunted like a pig, and filled all with terror and alarm, compelling them to pass almost the whole night awake. In vain did they try every means to banish it, for night after night every angle of the palace would be disturbed by it. At last, convinced that it was something supernatural, they called in a holy monk to exorcise it. The good man came at once, and after going through the prescribed exorcisms, he found

that it was Otilia herself, Henry's wife, who was appearing. When asked in what state she was, she said that by the mercy of God, obtained, perhaps, by the tears of her cook, she had been saved, but that in punishment of her inhumanity to the poor she was in the flames of purgatory, and that only under that fearful form could she implore the suffrages of her friends, because she had thrown the food of the needy to the pigs. Her rich relations got here an eloquent lesson; but their misfortunes were not yet over.

In the meantime, Notburga was living content in her new situation—minding the cattle, spinning, cooking, and attending to the other affairs of the house. She was daily growing in virtue in the eyes of the Lord, and enjoyed unalterable peace. Neither the thirst for gold, nor a hungering after pleasures ever tormented her. Her only ambition was to sanctify her works by doing them in the presence of God, to spend some time in prayer, and lay up something for the poor, whom she loved like a tender mother. On Sundays and festival days, as well as their eves, it was well known where Notburga was to be found. After the unavoidable work of the house she was seen praying before the image of the Blessed Virgin in St. Rupert's Chapel, or attending the ceremonies in the parish church, or devoutly listening to the Divine Word, or keeping Jesus company in the Blessed Sacrament. It happened once in harvest-time that the farmer, pleading urgency of labour, desired his pious servant to reap on Saturday evening longer than they had agreed on. Notburga reminded him of their bargain, and threw up her hook in the air as a sign of her determination. Prodigy of heaven! the hook was miraculously suspended in the air, to the great wonder of the reapers, and as a lesson to all who might wish to infringe the custom prevalent in that country of sanctifying the eves of festival days. On this her master left



our saint at perfect liberty, and she in gratitude went to return God thanks for so marked a favour.

A war broke out between Albert, Duke of Austria, and Otho, Duke of Bavaria, and the discord reached the house of the Baron of Rattemberg. Gutta's two sons took opposite sides, Henry under the banner of the Tyrolese, and Sigefrid in the camp of the Bavarian, and the whole country was inflamed in discord and laid waste by devastation. Solitude and silence commonly lead to serious meditations. Henry when alone, on a certain occasion, was comparing the present misfortunes of his house with its past prosperity and peace, and could not do less than remember the virtues of his holy cook, and acknowledge the hand of God, who was avenging the injustice done His humble servant. This thought constantly haunted him, and after consulting with a pious religious, he resolved to seek her out and again bring down the blessings of heaven on his house.

Notburga little dreamt of the triumph which the Almighty was preparing for her, thinking only of fulfilling the divine will by sanctifying herself in her humble occupations. She was surprised, indeed, when she saw Don Henry before her, entreating her to return to the palace. She asked for time to reflect, and after recommending the matter to God, she accepted the proposal, but under several conditions: first, that he should be reconciled to his brother, and leave their afflicted vassals at peace; second, that she should be allowed to daily distribute the fragments to the poor; and lastly, that after her death her coffin should be placed on a cart drawn by oxen, and she should be buried wherever they should stop after being let loose, without direction of any kind. It cost the proud baron something to consent to the first condition, but he at last agreed, so anxious was he to secure the treasure he sought. And he was not deceived in his expectations,

for the blessing of God again descended on his house on the return of the saintly cook. She was an angel of peace between the two brothers, and brought contentment to their vassals, and consolation to the afflicted poor, who ever found in her a loving protector. These last were certainly the gainers by the cook's triumph, for besides the means she had of assisting them before she left her employment in the palace, she could now incline Henry's mind to aid them in their difficulties. And she certainly did not fail to exercise this influence to God's greater glory and the advantage of His poor. Whenever she went to town on business, one of her favourite visits was to the prisoners in jail, consoling them in their captivity, and giving them some present to make their sufferings more endurable.

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#### IV.

At home, too, she had also special objects on whom to exercise her zeal. By Otilia's unexpected death her son was left in half orphanage. Young Henry found in Notburga the tenderness of a loving mother. With regard to his religious education, she was indefatigable in teaching him the Catechism, imbuing him with holy maxims, and, above all, in inspiring him with love and mercy for the needy, and whenever she could, distributing the alms by his hand. Our Divine Master said: "Seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you." And this happened in the castle of Rattemberg. When its master went in search of honours and wealth with arms in his hand, and forgetful of the kingdom of God, riches, and glory, and peace appeared to fly from its walls; but as soon as he returned to the Christian life of his ancestors, and



sought the kingdom of God in the fulfilment of the divine precepts, torrents of peace and happiness poured on his family. As to material prosperity, by the cook's economy the house not only recovered from the losses suffered in the late struggle, but its means were increased in proportion to the generosity exercised towards the poor.

In the year 1295, Henry contracted a second marriage with Margaret Hochenekia. She was a pious Christian woman, very compassionate to the poor, and consequently agreed well with the good cook, to whom she gave full liberty as well to pursue her devotions as to exercise her works of mercy. There were several children from this marriage, and as soon as they were able to lisp, Notburga taught them to bless the God of mercies, and invoke the sweet names of Jesus and Mary. Under her influence the whole palace breathed piety and fervour. Through the ascendant her virtues had acquired for her she banished all loose and idle talk, so that nothing was spoken of in her presence but ordinary things, or indifferent events, or good and edifying examples. It is wonderful what can be done by a person animated by zeal and prudence for the reform of customs and habits among acquaintances. The baron himself, moved by her example, and remembering the chastisement inflicted on Otilia for her hardness to the needy, gave orders for an annual dinner for five hundred poor in the convent of St. George, on the anniversary of her death. The two sons, who successively inherited his property, one belonging to Otilia and the other to Hochenekia, not only continued the donation, but increased the number of poor to a thousand. Notburga lived eighteen years under her new mistress, and during all that time never gave her cause of complaint; on the contrary, by her anxiety to please all for Jesus Christ, she gained the affection not only of her employers, but of all who knew

her. At last she was attacked by a serious illness, and after reminding Don Henry of his promise about her burial, and receiving the holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction, she slept the sleep of the just, to rise on the last day as the accuser of those who regard, without commiseration, the misfortunes of the needy. Great was the grief manifested by the poor at the loss of their amiable benefactor, and they proved it publicly at the solemn office celebrated for her.

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V.

The funeral car was prepared, and on it were placed the mortal and venerable remains of the saint, and the castle gates were opened to give free passage to the oxen, who at once went on the high road. Behind followed the priest, and the lord and the heir of the house on horseback, and all the rest of the family on foot; and a great multitude of poor bewailed the death of their benefactor. The oxen soon left the road, and went straight to the Yun. The river was swollen and unfordable, but the oxen did not stop. When the car entered the river, to the great astonishment of all, the waters divided and made a free passage for the sacred remains, as formerly the Jordan did in presence of the Ark of the Covenant. When they reached the opposite side the oxen stood, as if awaiting the funeral procession, and as soon as it had arrived they again went forward and halted not till they reached the chapel near Eben, where Notburga was accustomed to pray to the Blessed Virgin when she was in the farmer's service. And thus the Lord turned to the glory of his servant what she had intended for her humiliation. The venerable remains were buried here according to the deceased's desire. As soon as the fame of the miraculous translation of the holy cook was known, many people came to implore her

protection. And they were not disappointed; for the Lord, who delights in exalting the humble, glorified with numerous prodigies His faithful servant, who so well negotiated with her talents of grace in her humble position. Later on, the gratitude and liberality of the faithful erected on the same spot a beautiful temple under the invocation of St. Notburga.



## ANNA, OR THE POOR WOMAN OF SEVILLE, LACEMAKER AND SPINNER.

### I.

SHE was called the poor Sevillian because she was born in Seville of parents whom reverse of fortune drove from the mountains to that town. A few months after her birth she lost her mother, who also left behind four other children; but Divine Providence sent her a protector in the person of a rich merchant, a countryman of her father's, who with his wife's consent adopted her. This charitable couple reared her with great care, and as soon as she was able to lisp, taught her the Christian doctrine, which she repeated with singular grace. She learned to commune with God before she could speak with men, and she was scarcely three years and a half when she would go with the girls of the house to perform exercises of piety and penance; and she would inflict chastisement on her tender body as if it were guilty of sin whilst offering her prayers for the souls in Purgatory. In this line she persevered all her life.

She once found a cross painted on a piece of paper, and surrounded by the instruments of the Passion, and she took it with great reverence, and pinned it to the wall of her room, where she often contemplated it with deep devotion. After these fervent exercises she would roll it up in another paper and keep it in her bosom as a great treasure. At five years she could talk of nothing but God and holy things, and she would retire to her hiding-place to pray and chastise herself. This attracted the curiosity of the servants, who admired her saintly inclinations, and found her sometimes absorbed in contemplation. What consolation this occasioned her putative mother it is not difficult to imagine, when we take into account the piety of this fervent matron, and the love she had for the child. And Anna had also her own infantile delight in it.

From her ardent love of God sprung, as from its proper source, the charity which in her tender years she had for the poor; not a sterile charity, but an ingenious and fruitful one. Every day she kept something of what she got to eat at home, and when going to school would give it to the poor on the street, endeavouring to do so as quietly as possible that she might not be observed. But as she did it so often it became known to her parents, as we may call them, who reprimanded her, not for the act of charity, but for depriving herself of what they gave her for her own use. But her spirit of self-denial and compassion was so great that she could not restrain the impulses of charity for her neighbour.

At five years of age she knew how to read, and she spent all the time she could in perusing books of devotion, particularly lives of saints, in the consideration of which she took special pleasure. She experienced such delight in this and in prayer that, in order to make her go out to play, they had to take her books and her beads from her, and yet they could not wean her from these

holy things. The devil could not bear these promising auspices, and to scare her from her retirement he appeared to her in a fearful form, which caused her such horror that she fell down as if dead and got an attack of the heart, which remained with her some years. But what caused the poor child the greatest grief was, that on this account they deprived her of her books, and devotions and penances, as they scarcely left her alone a single minute. When awake her loving aspirations to Jesus and His Virgin Mother Mary were almost continual, and when she slept, the Queen of Angels would appear to her with the Child in her arms, and let her kiss his feet, whilst He bestowed on her His benediction. When she awoke she was filled with such peace and sweetness by her dreams, that during the day they served as the subject of her meditations and the source of new delights. God often miraculously saved her in terrible falls and imminent risks of her life; and this made her own people and others regard her as the elect of the Lord. This idea was contributed to by her discretion and grace in speaking of holy things, which were the subject of all her conversations, and other events with which the Lord confirmed it.

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## II.

The merchant who had adopted her went to America, whence he sent a picture of Christ crucified, after which several months passed without a letter from him. One night they were speaking of this delay round the fire, and they knelt down to say the Rosary, and pray that they might soon have news from him. Then they went to bed, and Anna said three *Credos* on her knees before the image, beseeching the Lord in all the simplicity of

her heart to restore her father, and after these prayers she went to sleep as usual. That night she dreamed that she was in a foreign land, in a country where it was daylight, and she saw her father eating with others, but **very** sad looking. Anna told her dream to her mother, and they soon found it confirmed by letters which arrived telling them of his affliction at great losses he had suffered just before the dream occurred. At seven years of age she took great delight in attending the ceremonies of the Church, and talking of her soul's affairs to her mother's confessors. Seeing the discretion and brightness of the little orphan, and the lively desire she had to receive communion, they proposed to her mother to allow her. To make the step surer she sent her to Father Michael de Santa Maria, a learned and virtuous man, who was astonished at her answers, and not only granted her request. but made her his spiritual child, in order to direct her in the way of the saints.

The Eucharistic Bread was an efficacious medicine for Anna; for with frequent communion the disease of the heart from which she suffered completely disappeared. On her recovery she again resorted to her penances, which she had never wholly given up, and renewed her fervour in her intercourse with God, seeking to treat with Him alone on every occasion possible. Between nine and ten years, the enemy who had gained nothing by his deceitful apparitions, tried to stop her on the road she had entered on, by terrible scruples, but to no purpose, for she humbly looked for directors in her darkness, and obediently carried out all their prescriptions. At ten she realised the deceit of the world, and carefully avoided its snares. She had hair like fine threads of gold, which was the delight of her mother, who took great pleasure in combing and arranging it. Anna despised all this adornment, and looked on the precious time spent over it as lost. She took a pair of scissors and cut of

the beautiful hair, and threw it behind a box till she should afterwards put it in the dung-pit. She had scarcely concluded this sacrifice to the Lord, when her mother called her to comb it. She almost died of grief at sight of such a spectacle ; but on reflection she was convinced of Anna's good intentions. Then she was greatly edified by that brilliant example, and never more put her hand to her head to arrange it. The girl was much pleased at this, and more so when she found that others, in imitation of her, renounced the vanity of their adornments, and spent their time at more useful things.


Whilst thus daily sanctifying herself she lost her putative father in her fourteenth year. And some days after, the Lord also visited her widowed mother with a prolonged illness, of which she died surrounded with all the care that Anna could bestow on her. The widow left the orphan a child's share in her will, which supplied her with ample means to live decently, but also caused her annoyance and bitterness, as it excited the hatred of the legal heirs, who in spite appointed as her guardian a woman of loose habits. This bad woman persecuted and maltreated her when she found her at her devotions, and also scolded her for not joining in worldly diversions like others. This bad treatment stung Anna's noble soul ; but what afflicted her most was to find herself torn from her prayers, in which she found a solace for her crosses. She was often kept two or three days without food and the poor girl suffered all without complaint and with wonderful patience. The time she spent in the church was the only one in which she enjoyed any consolation, for beyond that she did not get a moment's rest, to the regret and astonishment of the neighbours. She had a picture of our Saviour's face, before which she was accustomed to pour out her soul ; but one of the coheirs disputed its possession, and with great grief she gave it up to him. But the injustice

was recompensed by another image which she soon after found lying on a table. This was her favourite book and the object of her veneration in her afflictions. One night, when the others were at supper, she went to bewail her sufferings in prayer, and the Lord favoured her with singular consolation. She felt during it a lively desire to suffer for Jesus, and she asked him to increase her pains and her fortitude to bear them for His greater glory. The Lord heard her, and her tribulations were augmented by new harsh treatment on the part of her guardian, and false accusations on the part of others. And in this affliction and bitterness, she had no one to consult and pour out her soul to, as her virtuous and wise confessor had died. One of the things that pained her most was their daily urging her to marry, without her knowing whom to appeal to for advice. Though she felt and manifested a particular inclination to a religious life, yet they arranged, that at eighteen years of age she should marry a widower, named Santillana, who had four sons and a young daughter, Providence thus arranging it that she might be a bright example to mothers and stepmothers,

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### III.

When she was married three years her husband failed, and was imprisoned for debt. As his liabilities were heavy, and new creditors were daily coming forward, Anna was stripped of all her means, even her child's-portion. And this was not the worst, for while one day dressing one of the two little daughters which God had given her, she was surprised by the officers of justice who came to auction out the house and all it contained. The poor thing felt this blow like the stroke of death,






and finding herself in the street without knowing whither to turn, she bewailed her lot, and cried to heaven to pity her. The Lord purifies the virtue of His own, but never abandons them. A pious woman happened just then to pass, and taking compassion on her misery, brought her to her own house for a few days, till she could procure some lodging. Her husband remained in prison without hope of obtaining his liberty unless he could procure bail for £30. His poor afflicted wife prostrated herself before a beautiful picture of St. John, and with tears besought him to succour them in their misery. The saint heard her, and with a voice intelligible to all present, said to her: "Don't fret; the money will come from a source you don't dream of. Your husband will have better fortune in Lisbon, and will send for you." Fifteen days after a person with whom they had no acquaintance, taking pity on the unhappy family, gratuitously advanced the £30, and Santillana was liberated and went to Lisbon, leaving his wife and children to the care of Divine Providence. And the protection of heaven indeed was required, considering the war hell waged against her; but she resolutely resisted all temptations, and allowed not her soul to be stained by the slightest sin.

She did not live idle, presuming on the liberal providence of the Lord, but worked day and night to support three step-children and her own two. Not finding, however, sufficient employment, seek it how she might, she asked some neighbouring women to teach her how to weave lace. On the produce of this labour, which at first only reached sixpence a day, she had to provide for six persons. The poor thing, after working the whole night, often deprived herself of a mouthful of bread, that she might be able to give it to the children, making not the slightest difference between them, but treating all with equal affection, as if they had been her

own. Great were the straits to which she was often reduced, but she bore them all with exemplary resignation, without uttering a complaint against God or man. She had to buy the thread for the lace on credit, and the shopkeepers often pressed her so hard for payment, that she had to fast several days to meet their demands. God helped her in her necessities by inspiring some good women to occasionally give her her dinner. At last she received a letter from her husband enclosing a draft for £4, with which she was able to pay her debts and escape from her difficulties. Amongst the penalties she endured, she had one great consolation in the fact that no one could interfere with her in her prayers and exercises of piety, in which she spent a good part of the night: though indeed we might say that her life was a continual prayer; for in her labour and domestic work she only sought to please her sweet Jesus, and when making lace she never lost a sense of the divine presence, nor failed in the contemplation of Christ crucified. It appears impossible that in the midst of such poverty she could succour the needy, and yet if she had only a mouthful of bread she divided it with them, and never could refuse them if she had anything to give. This generous charity was cherished by her frequent communions, for no matter what her occupations were, she always found time to receive that Divine Manna, at least on Sundays and holidays.

At the end of a year, when her husband's fortunes had somewhat improved in Portugal, she went with her children to join him in Lisbon. But her prosperity did not last long; for a war broke out, and they were exposed to the dangers and privations of a siege. The women were shut up in a castle, and there endured all the painful anxiety inevitably attached to such a position. Anna comforted them as well as she could, and promised that the enemy would soon withdraw through famine and



want of water. Their delight may be imagined when they found her prognostications realised.

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#### IV.

Santillana, now free from these disturbances, and finding his fortune daily improving, determined to return to Seville. His wife, who foresaw the new troubles they should have there, proposed to him to go to Madrid; but he persisted in his determination, and to Seville they went, where they arrived after a rough and stormy passage. When again established in that city, Anna resumed her regular life and pious exercises, often spending till two in the morning in prayer and penance. One of her greatest consolations was that her husband and all the family joined her in some of her vocal prayers and hours of retirement, converting her shop into a little monastery. All contributed to promote the honour and glory of God—Anna by her attention to her duties, the education of her children, and her domestic cares, and the others by imitating the good example in word and deed she ever gave them. But this calm was of short duration.

After a short time, fortune again proved adverse to them, and Santillana had to spend another year in prison for debt, having lost all he had saved in Lisbon. Sad and pensive he complained of his hard lot, and had no consolation but the sweet words of his loving spouse. "Let us rejoice in the Lord, my dear," said Anna, "and forget the things of earth; for though we deserve great punishment for our sins, the Lord treats us like a good Father, giving us time and life to lay up by our sufferings treasures of glory in heaven. Let us not think of the past, for it is gone, as the present will go, and a

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brighter day will break on us." With such advice she consoled him and encouraged him to bear his cross with resignation. A second time they were steeped in great misery, and it was almost a miracle how that numerous family was sustained. In addition to the children by the first marriage there were now four belonging to Anna. On one occasion there was only half a loaf for all, and it would appear that Jesus renewed the multiplication of the loaves in the desert. Anna took the bread, raised her eyes to Christ crucified, and asked Him to impart his blessing to it, and so provide for those who were the work of his omnipotent hand. She then divided it among all, and after they were satisfied, as much remained as did the children's breakfast next morning.

Another new weight was now added to her heavy cross. Her husband's daughter by the first marriage had fits of madness, in which she destroyed everything in the house she could lay hands on, and blackened her character with false accusations and indecent expressions, sometimes even raising her hand to her own father. As she was not always mad, she was allowed to go about the house, and in Santillana's absence she slept in the same room with his wife, who could get very little rest indeed, fearing she should make some sudden attack on herself or the children. Hence before retiring for the night she not only recommended her family and each individual of it to their guardian angels, but also fervently prayed to Jesus, for sake of his holy cross, to free them from that danger. The mad girl in her lucid moments related that having one night arisen to murder her stepmother, she saw, on approaching the bed, a brilliant cross over it, which appeared to set the room on fire, and this restrained her and prevented her from ever after attempting to harm anyone in the house.

As if this were not sufficient proof of his servant, the

Lord, in order to increase her deserts, sent her a new calamity in the protracted illness of her husband. In these straits she had no resource but Divine Providence, who afflicts us for our good, but never oppresses. Begging is no vice or dishonour when our misery forces us to it, and Anna by hers was compelled to go out and ask alms for the love of God, rejoicing that she was thus more assimilated to Jesus Christ, who came into the world poor and naked. A pious woman gave her some beans and half a loaf, and for this she returned a thousand thanks to the Lord who moves hearts. The Lord multiplied these provisions through the prayers of his servant, and eight persons lived on them ten days, without counting the sick man, after which the Lord provided for them another way.

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## V.

The patient grew worse ; a large swelling formed on his head, and the doctors despaired of him. In these straits she stole from the short hours allotted to her repose time to say a portion of the Rosary for him. When finishing, she heard like a woman's voice saying : "Fear not; he shall not die of this sickness." She recited the second part, and again she heard the same words; and when she said the third part, the same occurred. Though she did not trust much in such promises, particularly when she saw him momentarily growing worse, yet the issue proved that her prayers were not in vain, for in three days he was out of danger, and on the fifth day got out of bed. But this did not improve the poor family's condition. Santillana could

find no work or employment, and all had to live on what Anna earned, and sometimes this did not amount to more than a few pence. But she worked away like a good mother, and when she had no lace or clothes to make, she spun the whole day long. Still there was a whole summer that her family had to live on a few fruit and some vegetables, and some days they had nothing at all to eat. In the midst of all these privations, full of trust in God, she blessed and praised Him for preserving them in this valley of pains, of which it might indeed be said that her life was an uninterrupted chain. To fill up her chalice one of her stepsons, who might be able to help them, went to America, and a daughter took the small-pox, which threatened to blind her. Of the former they never heard any news, as she had foreseen, and the latter, contrary to the opinion of the doctors, was cured by the sign of the cross, which her mother made on her eyes.

So many afflictions, one would think, should make her dull and pensive, but no! she was always contented and satisfied with the divine will, never neglecting an occasion of doing good to the souls of others. For some time she had with her a woman who, though not a bad character, spent hours in vain and superfluous conversations. Anna suffered much from this bad habit, and seeing that advice and counsel were no use, she at last told her she must either give it up or look for some other lodging. Her action produced such a good effect that the woman, to Anna's great satisfaction, entered on a more fervent and retired mode of life. On another occasion there lived in the house of the servant of God a husband and wife, who were always quarrelling. At first she bore patiently with their rows, praying for them in her own room, but after three months she took active steps to silence both, and succeeded in completely reforming them. Another time a woman of bad life came

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to her door, and calling her, said: "Anna, I am not worthy to speak to you." And she answered: "It is true I want no friendship with those who fly from that of Jesus Christ, who redeemed us with his blood." And she spoke to her in such a way about the gratitude we owe to God, and the foulness and effects of sin, that she drew tears of repentance from that heart and a firm promise to amend her life. In this she was aided not a little by the zealous servant of God, who, though extremely poor, deprived herself of her food to give it to the penitent and free her from the temptation of vice; and she bought her a machine for making ribbons, looking out at the same time for employment for her. In this way the poor woman led a good and penitent life, and reached a high degree of perfection, to the great glory of God and the edification of all who had known her former courses.

In the meantime Anna was wearing her crown of thorns, which in heaven should be turned into precious pearls. Her destitution increased, and with tears she made her appeal to God, her usual comforter. He heard her, and promised her relief, which came through a woman who wanted a new dress. Anna had never cut out nor made such garments, but trusting in God she undertook the task, and succeeded so well that a merchant offered her employment. She also suffered much from her neighbours, who were not always to her liking, nor as virtuous as she could desire; and when she did afterwards meet others more to her taste, she had to suffer the mortification of asking assistance from them for her four sick children. They were not deaf to her appeals, for some attended them while she worked, and others relieved them with alms.

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## VI.

When this tempest was over, her husband went to collect some money due to his mistress. Contrary to his custom and promise at eleven o'clock at night he had not returned. Anna was alarmed, and dreaded some accident. She had recourse to prayer, her refuge in all her difficulties, and she also made her children kneel before Christ crucified and pray for their father. They remained thus till Santillana arrived with his clothes almost torn from his back, saying that he had been robbed of all the money, and had almost lost his life. In this way did one trial follow another, almost without any counteracting comfort. When our saint was thirty-seven years of age she lost two of her children. When the first was dying, the image of death filled her with dread, and our Lord said to her in prayer: "What are you afraid of? I want that child." And she answered: "Lord, everything in my house is thine." She also suffered much at the loss of the second, who was a daughter, five years of age, resembling her very much in appearance and disposition, and called after her, but she consoled herself by reflecting that the little angels were going to bless God in heaven. Nor did her heart deceive her. When meditating one day in prayer on the beauty and grandeur of heaven, and the happiness her children there enjoyed, she was rapt in spirit and found herself in the region of happiness as described by St. John. On one hand and the other were high walls of jasper, with their twelve gates of emerald; in every direction were galleries and palaces of purest gold, transparent as limpid crystal. Here and there in the bases



and capitals shone precious sapphires, diamonds, pearls, and stones of incalculable value. In the middle of the square was raised the indescribable throne of God, from whose foot flowed the clear river of living water, and on either bank were verdant trees of life, whose branches, laden with the fruit of every month, ineffably refreshed the eye. There there is neither temple nor sun. The brightness of God is enough, emitting torrents of light, which, reflected from the golden walls and sparkling on the crystalline waters, appeared infinitely multiplied, momentarily presenting a thousand varied phases and surprising changes. Whithersoever the eyes turned they met new and charming panoramas, which ravished the senses and refreshed the soul. The very floor, under the reflections of light, appeared living gold. Here and there ravishing music and softest melody arising from millions of voices were heard, repeated with mysterious echo from palace to palace and producing ineffable delight. The eye also beheld armies of martyrs, of prophets, of doctors, each one wearing its own special livery. That of the Divine Lamb pleased her above all, and He was followed by innumerable virgins clothed in stoles whiter than ermine. Among these she saw her two children submerged in the joy of God and filled with his glory and majesty. When she recovered from that glorious rapture she gave God thanks for the works of His infinite mercy, who thus exalts the lowly.

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## VII.

This view of heaven inflamed her in lively desires to attain perfection and augment her penances, so that her

confessor had to restrain her, as also her other spiritual exercises, which converted her sufferings into pleasure and her crosses into joy. What other spirit could so patiently support her in the tribulations with which she was ever surrounded? The merchant who gave her employment for her needle went off to America, depriving her of that assistance. This caused her and her children great suffering, and was to them such a privation that they had to live eight days on a little boiled fish without a morsel of bread, which was at the time very dear. And yet in that miserable state she could find something for the poor. One day she earned the price of a small loaf, and at dinner time a beggar presented himself, whom she invited to join them. He did so, and they all ate to satisfaction of the loaf and fish, which was the only food they had. All our saint's virtues were heroic; but zeal for the divine glory filled her breast, and diffused itself in all directions. Through her care the daughters she still had, Paula, Johanna, and Balthazara, were models of Christian maidens, reared up in her own spirit of prayer and recollection. As Santillana, by Anna's brilliant example, whom he always dearly loved, was also very devout, that poor house appeared a religious community in which, beyond the time spent by each member in special meditation and prayer, all recited the holy Rosary and performed other devotions in common. Everything was done with such order and punctuality, that it infused devotion into all who came in contact with them.


They say there is no rose without thorns, and Anna's life, though pure, was not free from some slight imperfections, such as a momentary lukewarmness in prayer, a superfluous word, the loss of a minute, and things of that sort. But she made no truce with them, endeavouring, as soon as possible, to amend and improve. Since the time she had almost fatal fainting fits, when she fell into the slightest fault she felt her hands, or a portion

of them, burn as if they were in living fire. When she experienced this chastisement, which lasted the longer the more serious the fault, she immediately examined her conscience to find out her error and humbly bewail it. This increased her desire to see herself free from all stain, for which purpose she used to go to confession three or four times a day. At this time also the scruples which had previously tormented her increased, and she went from confessor to confessor without finding rest, believing that she did not know how to make a confession. Unfortunately in such cases a change of confessors only helps to aggravate one's doubts and perplexities. If sometimes the minister of Jesus Christ praised her purity of conscience, instead of calming, it increased her grief, for acutely feeling her faults herself, she imagined she did not tell them clearly, or that her confessor did not understand her, and so she was constantly tortured seeking for light in her darkness and rest in her doubts and scruples. She found little alleviation in creatures, the Lord desiring to purify her virtues, till He inspired her to think of the four last things. And indeed the recollection of them did mitigate the stings of her scruples; but such was the intensity with which she considered them, that when meditating one day on death she felt so overpowered that she thought she was dying, her limbs becoming rigid and her whole appearance indicating approaching dissolution.

God so ordaining it for the instruction of mothers solicitous for the good of their daughters, her child Johanna was asked to take service in a nobleman's house. Anna, unwilling to expose her to the dangers of the world beyond the control of her vigilance, at first refused, but at last consented against her will, in obedience to her confessor, who told her not to be poor and proud. The latter soon found how correct the mother's judgment was, and after four months he and others urged herto

bring her daughter home. The poor woman tried, but they would not part with her, for the lady of the house loved her dearly for her virtue and proper conduct; but she insisted and entreated so earnestly, in season and out of season, that at last she succeeded in bringing her home. Here they all lived in peace as they had ever lived, aiding each other without quarrel or dispute. After a time Anna knew in prayer that her husband's death was approaching. He, whether from a like notice, or because he knew it from his wife's sadness, said to her: "My dear Anna, you shall soon see me no more, for the grave is calling me." And one and the other, conformable to the divine will, tranquilly awaited his departure from this exile.

In the course of three weeks, he called her one night and told her his last hours were come, and charged her like a good mother to mind her daughters. On the following morning he arose as usual, and went out to Mass. On his return he went to bed, never to rise again. He foretold the hour of his death, and calling his children, he told them to be humble and obedient to their mother, and invariably follow the path of virtue. At nightfall he fell into his agony. Then Anna and her daughters, compelled to withdraw by those present, went to pray to God for their beloved patient. His wife seeing in prayer her husband's terrible straits, and the fury and madness with which the devils attacked him, cried out fervently to the Father of Mercies, saying: "My Jesus, refuge of the afflicted, have mercy on his soul! What solitude is this I see him reduced to in the midst of his enemies . . . ?" To this she heard the following answer: "Through this pass those who die; and according to the number of their sins is that of their persecutors. But on the other hand, there are legions of angels, the saints he was devout to, and above all, the merits of Jesus which fortify the just." On this she resignedly received



the news of his death, offering up to God her three daughters, and placing them under His protection. Afterwards, when praying for the eternal repose of his soul, he appeared to her sad and wan, in sign of the pains he was suffering in purgatory. She was alarmed at this vision, and could not sleep till she understood its meaning.

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## VIII.

Soon after Santillana's death the widow and her daughters went to live in a poor and secluded house, where they commenced to lead a life almost of nuns. Their exercises consisted in going very early to Mass, and to perform other devotions, then in working for their support, and joining together in some pious practices. Anna took great care to accustom her daughters to an interior life, and not only succeeded in training them to spend a considerable part of the night in prayer and the exercises of penance, but merited from the Lord a vision in which she saw two of them represented as trees laden with fruit, and the other as a plant covered with flowers, shedding around a delicious fragrance. Their life was so edifying, that they were a model to the whole neighbourhood. Their whole intercourse was with God ; and if they had dealings with any persons, they were people of virtue, or in distress, or those for whom they were working. The good mother led the van in everything, particularly in humility and poverty. She always avoided the visits of the great, and when through obedience or charity she had to see people of distinction, though needy, she never would take any of their offerings, and she looked on it as an insufferable abuse to

make a profession of virtue, in order to secure an entrance into the houses of the rich and make profit of piety, for in her eyes this was not only an abominable hypocrisy, but even a certain sort of simony. She asked alms only when in extreme necessity, and this rarely happened, for besides being very diligent at her work, she always lived poorly and economically, and so avoided being troublesome to others.

However, such were her virtue and modesty, that on one hand she inspired those who saw her with reverence and devotion, and gained, on the other, the good-will of all who had dealings with her, whilst making them anxious to hear her speak of holy things. On this account some people used to invite her to their houses and keep her there entire days for the spiritual benefit they derived from intercourse with her; but she never consented to this without express orders from her confessor, and even in case of being obliged to it by obedience, though she went submissively and at once, her mind never felt entirely at ease, she was so fond of solitude and silence, and of living unknown to the whole world. She also sacrificed this love of retirement when the Lord inspired her to visit some sick person, particularly if poor and needy.

Soon after she became a widow she took the habit of the barefooted Trinitarians, by the advice of St. Michael de los Santos, and after her year of probation, made the customary simple vows. Though always charged with the cross, and suffering for a long time from the burning of her hands when she committed any fault, as she had requested, yet, from the time she put on the habit her pains increased, and she felt most acute stings in her hands, feet, and side, particularly on Fridays. Her fingers and toes suffered intensely, but all did not satisfy her desire of suffering for Jesus, for greedy as it were of assimilating herself more and more to her Beloved, she



asked for greater pains, and the Lord, ever generous in this kind of gifts, heaped on her all sorts of interior and exterior afflictions, which she bore with holy patience and great merit.

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## IX.

Now the poor Sevillian was full of deserts and anxious to fly to receive the recompense of her tribulations. But her death should be like her life, and Divine Providence so disposed it, that one Good Friday the pains she had suffered heretofore should so increase, that she should not have one moment's rest till death should liberate her. So intense were her sufferings, that the doctors thought each day must be her last; but on the feast of the Ascension she grew so ill that the last sacraments were hurriedly administered to her, and received by her with great devotion and joy of soul. From the time she took to bed she observed rigorous silence, and though there were people at her side morning and evening, they never heard from her more than the most indispensable words, so absorbed was she in God and the affairs of her soul. This silence was wonderful in one who for the space of four months was suffering pains comparable to those of purgatory, without uttering a groan or complaint. When they brought her the holy Viaticum her confessor was absent from Seville, and those present thinking she should die without seeing him, recommended her to God in prayer; but she told them not to trouble themselves, for that she should not die before her father returned, and that he would perform her funeral rites. This was not credited at the time, for as Father Antonio del Espiritu Santo was at a great distance engaged on im-

portant business connected with the Order, it was impossible he could come for several months. Thus did the religious think who were attending her, and thus did they tell her; but she answered: "Yes, he will come, and soon; for such is the will of the Lord." Whilst this was occurring Father Antonio was elected in Madrid minister of Seville, and leaving the business he had been engaged on, departed for his convent, being thus enabled to attend at the death and burial of the venerable Anna.

She was attended by the religious of the Holy Trinity, who, at her entreaty, related to her the torments and passion of Jesus Christ. Such were the flames of love excited in her heart, that when they reached the agony of our Saviour, her eyes were bathed in tears of compassion, and invoking the sweet name of Jesus three times, she gave up her soul to her Creator. Her happy death occurred at noon, on Friday, the 21st of July, 1617. In a few hours the news spread through the city that the saint was dead; and though, on account of her retirement and humility, little known, such a multitude collected, that the house was unable to entertain them, and her body had to be translated to the spacious square of a neighbouring one. All kissed her hands, and touched her dress with their medals and rosaries. Her face, previously wan and worn, assumed a beautiful appearance; and her whole person excited veneration, on account of the odour it diffused. When the hour of her burial arrived, which was at sunset, a pious rivalry arose between the Franciscans and barefooted Trinitarians. Each stated their claim to bear the remains to their last resting-place, and a compromise had to be come to to settle the dispute, each helping to carry them to their appointed rest beneath the altar. God published the virtues of his saint by several miracles. Such was the example bequeathed us by the humble Sevillian, who,



without gold or silver was owner of inestimable riches, possessing in a heroic degree all the virtues more precious than the treasures of the universe. Her pains and afflictions passed away, but the eternal joys which, according to our pious belief, she now experiences, shall not pass away for ever. Happy those who walk in her footsteps!

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## Reading from the History of the Holy Family.

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### FROM THE HISTORY OF THE RICH MAN TO THE RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS.

OUR Saviour intended to go to Jerusalem for the feast of tabernacles, which was celebrated in October. He took the road by the other side of the Jordan, and went towards the holy city, in the meantime giving His disciples and the people, who flocked to Him, important instructions, about the avarice of the Pharisees, the indissolubility of marriage, the malice of scandal, and other points of no less importance. Among other things He told them the story of the rich man. "There was a certain rich man," said He, "who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasted sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, who lay at his gate, full of sores, desiring to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table; moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. And the rich man also died, and he was buried in hell; and lifting up his eyes when he was in torments, he saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said: Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the

tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame. And Abraham said to him : Son, remember that thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime, and likewise Lazarus evil things : but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is fixed a great chaos : so that they who would pass from hence to you, cannot, nor from thence come hither. And he said : Then father, I beseech thee that thou wouldst send him to my father's house, for I have five brethren ; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torments. And Abraham said to him : They have Moses and the prophets ; let them hear them. But he said : No, father Abraham, but if one went to them from the dead, they will do penance. And he said to him : If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe if one rise again from the dead." So great is the blindness in which his passions bury the sinner !

In the meantime, some of his relatives, who did not believe in our Lord's divinity, or in His miracles, invited Him to get to Jerusalem as soon as possible, to confirm His doctrine by new prodigies in presence of His disciples. Jesus answered, that His hour was not yet come, but for them it was ever the same ; and added, that the world did not abhor them, but it hated Him, because He published its wickedness ; and, consequently, that they might go when they liked, but for the present, He remained where He was. After their departure, Jesus also went up to the holy city, but, as it were in secret, and in the middle of the eight day feast, He presented Himself in the temple, and began to teach His heavenly doctrine. The Jews, who knew that Jesus had got no education, were astonished at His wisdom and learning ; but our Lord discovered the secret, and declared to them that His doctrine was not His own, but His heavenly Father's who had sent Him. Some

people wondered that Jesus would speak thus in public, knowing His enemies had sworn to have his life, and they said to each other: "Is not this He, whom they seek to kill? . . . and they say nothing to Him! . . . have the rulers known for a truth that this is the Christ?" others answered: "We know this man whence he is: but when the Christ cometh, no man knows whence He is." And as Jesus continued to proclaim His divinity, the chief priests and the Pharisees sent ministers to seize Him, but no one laid a hand on Him, for His hour was not yet come. The last day of the Feast of Tabernacles Jesus stood in the middle of the temple, and exclaimed in a loud voice: "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. 'He that believeth in me, as the Scripture saith, 'Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.'" This He said of the Spirit those should receive who believed in Him. This language increased the diversity of opinions which reigned among the people with regard to our Saviour. Some, moved by the grandeur and splendour of His miracles, regarded Him as the Christ, or at least as a great prophet; whilst others, on the contrary, looked on Him as an impostor, and held that being a Galilean, He could be no prophet. The Pharisees complained that their emissaries had not seized the Redeemer, and the ministers answered: "Never did man speak as this man!" And the priests replied: "Are you also seduced?" Night came on, and everyone went home, but Jesus passed it in the garden of Olives.

The next day He went very early to the temple, and taught the crowds which gathered about Him. Whilst He was instructing them, His sworn enemies brought to Him a woman caught in adultery, and said: "Master, this woman was even now taken in adultery. Now Moses in the law commanded us to stone such a one. But what sayest thou? And this they said, tempting Him that they might accuse Him. But Jesus bowing Him-

self down, wrote with His finger on the ground. When therefore, they continued asking Him, He lifted up Himself and said to them: He that is without sin among you let him cast a stone at her. And again stooping down, he wrote on the ground. But they hearing this, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest. And Jesus alone remained, and the woman standing in the midst. Then Jesus lifting up Himself said to her, Woman, where are they that accused thee? Hath no man condemned thee? Who said: No man, Lord. And Jesus said: Neither will I condemn thee. Go, and now sin no more." Thus did that Divine Pastor console and amend those who had strayed from the right way, and place them on the road of salvation.

When passing through the street on the following day, He saw a man who had been born blind; His disciples observing him also asked our Lord if this were in chastisement of his own sins, or of those of his parents. Our Saviour answered that it was for neither one nor the other; but that the glory of God might be manifested in him. He then made a little paste of dust and spittle, with which He anointed his eyes, and commanded him to wash in the fountain of Siloe. The blind man obeyed and was cured. As he was a beggar well known in the city, the news of the miracle immediately spread in all directions. Notwithstanding, many denied it, and in spite of the man's own assertions doubted he was the same person they had known to be blind. Of those who believed it, some pretended, because the prodigy was wrought on the festival day, that He could not be a friend of God; whilst others from the very fact of the miracle held that He was. In this difficulty they asked the blind man himself what was his opinion, and he answered that he looked on our Lord as a great prophet. For the purpose of establishing the authenticity of the prodigy, the Pharisees called the parents of him who had

been blind, and asked them if this was their son who had been blind from his birth. When they answered in the affirmative, they again asked: How was it that he then saw? They said they did not know; that they might ask himself, as he was old enough to answer. As the blind man, when called, asserted again and again, against the calumnies of the Scribes, that Jesus was a good man and a prophet, he was for his impartiality and gratitude expelled from the temple. Jesus met him the next day, and asked him: "Dost thou believe in the Son of God?" And he answered: "Who is he, Lord, that I may believe in him?" Jesus then said: "Thou hast both seen Him; and it is He who talketh with thee." And the blind man, full of faith, adored Him, and embraced His doctrine.

After this our Saviour returned to Galilee, but only for a short time, as He wished to be present at the commemoration of the dedication of the temple, which had been renewed by Judas Machabeus; and this feast was held in December, or Caslew, as the Jews called it. And as our Lord was passing through Samaria, on His way to Jerusalem, ten lepers met Him, and cried out: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." "Go," He answered, "show yourselves to the priests." This had to be done by all those who got cured of that disease. They went, and on the way they were made clean; but only one of them, and he a Samaritan, returned to give thanks to his benefactor. And Jesus said to him: "Were not ten made clean? and where are the nine? . . . Arise, go thy way, for thy faith hath made thee whole." As our Lord was in the temple one day the Pharisees asked Him when would the kingdom of God come. And He answered that they might not expect it to come in a wonderful and brilliant way, so as to attract attention; for the kingdom of God was in the midst of them. On this occasion, after foretelling them

some of the signs which should accompany the terrible day of judgment, He inculcated the importance of assiduous and constant prayer. Besides, to instruct some and to humble the pride of others, He related to them the following parable:—"Two men went up into the temple to pray: the one a Pharisee and the other a publican. The Pharisee, standing, prayed thus with himself: O God, I give Thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, as also is this publican. I fast twice a week: I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven; but struck his breast, saying: O God, be merciful to me, a sinner. I say to you, this man went down into his house justified rather than the other."

Here a young man of position asked Him: "Good Master, what shall I do to possess everlasting life?" And Jesus answered: "Thou knowest the commandments: Thou shalt not kill: Thou shalt not commit adultery: Thou shalt not steal: Thou shalt not bear false witness: Honour thy father and thy mother." "This have I done," replied the other, "from my earliest years." The Lord answered: "Yet one thing is wanting to thee: sell all whatever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me." The young man was sorrowful at hearing this, for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw him sad, He exclaimed: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." But what is impossible to natural strength becomes possible by grace.

On another similar occasion, and to a like question put to Him by a doctor, our Lord answered in like terms. He told him to love God and his neighbour and

he should have eternal life. The doctor, anxious to show his learning, again asked Him: "And who is my neighbour?" And Jesus looking at him, answered him in the following parable: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, who also stripped him, and having wounded him went away, leaving him half dead. And it chanced that a certain priest went down the same way; and seeing him, passed by. In like manner, also, a Levite, when he was near the place and saw him, passed by. But a certain Samaritan being on his journey, came near him, and seeing him was moved with compassion. And going up to him bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine: and setting him on his own beast brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out twopence, and gave to the host, and said: Take care of him; and whatsoever thou shalt spend over and above I, at my return, will repay thee. Which of these three, in thy opinion, was neighbour to him that fell among the robbers?" And the doctor answered, "He that showed mercy to him." And Jesus said: "Go, and do thou in like manner."

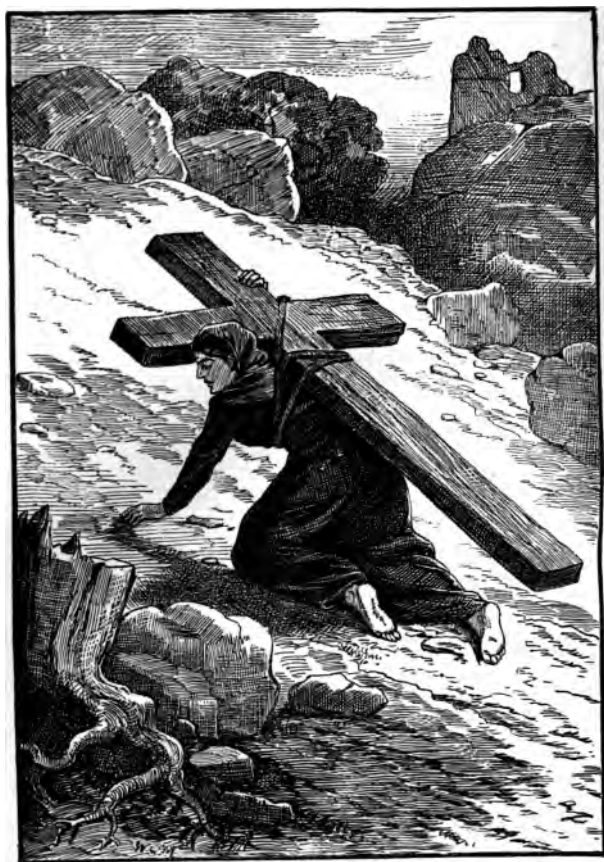
When passing again by the porch of Solomon, some Jews who were in the temple surrounded Him, and said: "How long dost thou hold our souls in suspense? If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." "I speak to you," He answered, "and you believe not: the works that I do, in the name of my Father, they give testimony of me. But you do not believe: because you are not of my sheep. My sheep hear my voice; and I know them, and they follow me. . . . I and the Father are one." Enraged at the blasphemer, as they imagined Him, they took up stones to cast them at Him, but He detained them, saying, "Many good works I have showed you from my Father; for which of these works do you stone me?" The Jews shouted, "For a good



work we stone Thee not, but for blasphemy ; and because that Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God." Jesus answered : " Is it not written in your law : ' I said you were gods.' If He called them gods, to whom the word of God was spoken, and the Scripture cannot be broken : Do you say of Him, whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world : Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God. If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, if you will not believe me, believe the works : that you may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in the Father." And not being able to answer the discourse of Jesus, they tried to take Him, but He escaped invisibly from their hands, and retired to Bethania, on the other side of the Jordan, where the Precursor had baptised, and remained there for the space of nearly a month. But it was soon known where He was, and many Jews went to see Him, and believed in Him, saying that the Baptist had wrought no miracle whatever, whilst Jesus had performed innumerable ones in confirmation of His Divinity and of His doctrine.

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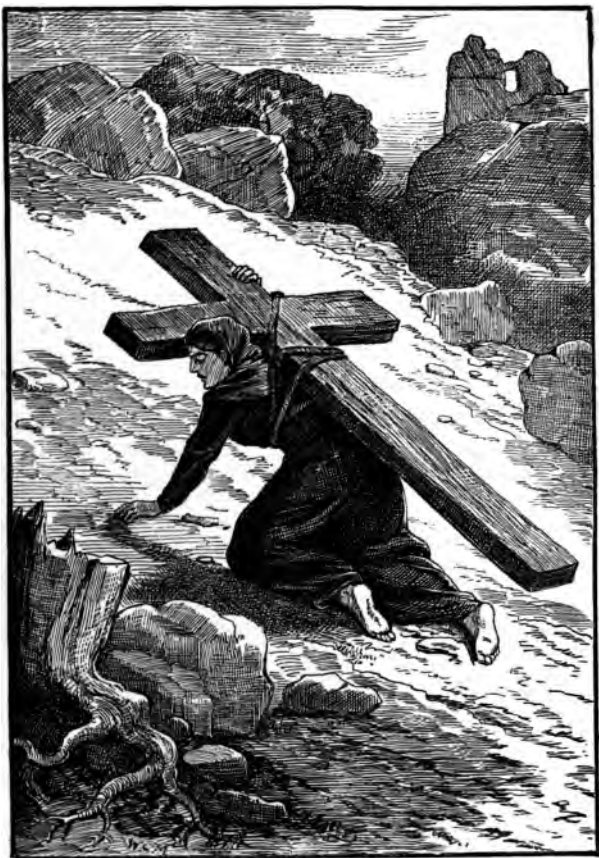




VENERABLE ANNA GARCIA.

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VENERABLE ANNA GARCIA.

# LIGHT FROM THE LOWLY.

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## Series X.

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ST. GALMIER, LOCKSMITH.

### I.

GALMIER, called in Latin Baldomerus, was born in the neighbourhood of Lyons, in France, where later on he fixed his residence. Imbued from his childhood in the maxims of our holy religion, he complied with them perfectly during his whole life, observing an exemplary and irreprehensible conduct. He spent his days in obscurity, work, and virtue. A member of a poor family, he was dedicated from his early years to the trade of a locksmith, in which he admirably united the exercise of the deepest piety to God, with a generous charity to his neighbour.

He arose every day very early, and consecrated the first hours to prayer and the consideration of eternal truths. His first care after washing and dressing was

to offer his works to God, from whom all good comes. Placing himself in the divine presence, he blessed His infinite goodness for the immense benefits he had received from His generous hand, and in gratitude for so many favours he offered Him all his thoughts, words, and actions, united to the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, finishing with a petition for all the graces he might need to pass the day in a holy manner. Oh, what madness are many Christians guilty of who spend days and weeks without raising their hearts to God, or consecrating to Him their actions and sufferings! For they lose an ineffable number of merits which they might acquire in the midst of their ordinary tasks. Our indifferent acts, the very toil we have to undergo are transformed into deserts when animated by the pure intention of pleasing God. Hence the saints repeatedly renewed this intention during the day; and for the same reason Galmier's first care was to consecrate the entire day to the Lord, offering all his actions and thoughts to His greater glory. After making this offering, and imploring the aid of the Omnipotent against the enemies who are constantly on the watch to ruin us, he attended the holy Sacrifice of the Mass with a devotion so tender, and a fervour so inflamed, that, absorbed in the contemplation of the mysteries there recorded, he never allowed himself to be voluntarily distracted. Having concluded these holy devotions in the first hours of the morning, he went with God's blessing to his work, and was the first to make the anvil ring to the blows of his hammer. All admired his attention to his work, particularly those who were aware of his disinterestedness. Certainly much can be done through the desire of acquiring the fleeting riches of the world; but when this desire is directed to a high and noble end, generous workmen appear to double their powers and make more available hours in the day than human

weakness is capable of. And this happened in the case of our locksmith. Content with his lot, he not only regarded his trade as a laudable means of procuring the necessaries of life, he not only found in it a fitting way to comply with the will of God, who in His beneficent providence had destined him to it; but he loved it as an exercise of penance very suitable to subdue his passions, and as a permanent source of relief to distribute to the poor. Hence he felt so satisfied.

And why should he not live content, if, enamoured of goods eternal, he found means in the midst of his toil of increasing them by the exercise of piety. The very things he handled, the iron, the fire, the ashes served to remind him, now of the hardness of obstinate sinners who resist the strokes of divine mercy, now of the eternal flames destined for the reprobate, now of the violence of earthly things, and now of other truths and maxims which a solitary devout heart learns to draw from the most insignificant things. He continually elevated his soul to God in fervent ejaculations, sometimes to consecrate his labours to Him anew, sometimes to ask for additional graces for himself or others. He sometimes saw in imagination our Saviour in St. Joseph's workshop engaged on work analogous to his own: and remembering that Jesus spent the best years of His life in His humble calling, he gave thanks to the King of grace for placing him in a trade so closely allied to that of his Divine Master. At other times he was seen to shed tears over the insensibility of men, who, harder than iron, were not softened by the calls and invitations of their loving Father. What pain this carelessness cost him, and what holy fear of his own unworthiness! Frequently when he saw the weakness of men in allowing themselves to be caught in the nets of hell, and the eagerness with which they pursued the things of earth, he was alarmed at the abyss of our



misery, and besought the Lord to grant him the gift of perseverance, and the grace to live always in His Divine friendship.

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## II.

Animated by sentiments so noble and good, it is easy to gather how our locksmith would pass his days. Though God condemned man to eat his bread with the sweat of his brow, He yet appointed him some days of rest to remind him of the felicity sacrificed by the sin of our first parents in paradise. He did not mean it as a sterile rest, but ordered him on those days to abstain from labour in order to recover his strength wasted by toil, and to remember God's benefits, and to labour in his sanctification. Guided by the light of these truths, Galmier on those days never took the liberty of finishing up any work, no matter how light, or of cleaning his tools, or of undertaking any servile work. With pleasure and longing he looked forward to the days and solemnities consecrated to corporal repose and divine worship;—and this not exactly for the rest of his wearied limbs, or the enjoyment of some amusement, but to spend them in a special manner to the honour and glory of God. He was never absent from Mass and the divine offices. Not content with this, he spent a long time before the Blessed Sacrament, and the remainder of the day he passed in pious reading, works of mercy, or some innocent recreation. In this way, far from drawing down on him the maledictions of heaven, which the Lord fulminates against the profaners of His festivals,

he procured the protection of Divine Providence, who watches in a special manner over the interests of His servants, as He has promised to all those who faithfully observe His commandments.

Galmier, like all those dedicated in earnest to the service of God, felt moved on the moment at sight of the misery of the needy ; and though a poor workman, by living and dressing as such, he was able from his daily savings to succour and console the indigent as if he had large means at his disposal. His commiseration for the afflicted was so strong that he was unable to resist its impulses, and gave all he had to them, retaining nothing but his unlimited confidence in Divine Providence. One day, after he had distributed all he possessed, he met a beggar who, confiding in the saint's charity, told him the straits in which he was placed. In vain did Galmier look to see if he could find anything left, for he had given all away : then touched by compassion, he took his tools and gave them to the poor man to sell, and thus relieve his wants. He had great difficulty in providing others ; but this difficulty was converted into a prelude of happiness by the ineffable joy he felt in the relief of the miserable. And whenever he found himself hard pressed, he had recourse to this new invention, and sold or pawned his tools for the benefit of others. And he was not content with this : he knew that it was of little avail to save the corruptible and miserable body, if we forget the great interests of the soul, the important affair of eternal salvation. And so he always added to his alms some expression of consolation and edification, the recollection of some eternal truth, or some fervent exhortation to detest sin, the origin of all misfortunes.

He encouraged them to bear patiently the trials of this exile, reminding them of the sufferings of Jesus, our Divine Model ; and he urged them to greater perfection,

that is, to love and joyfully receive the crosses that befell them, through the recollection of the eternal recompense which God has promised to those who suffered for His glory, and in testimony of the love they profess for the Lord, our only good, and the absolute Master of all things created. Let us learn, he would say, from the world's slaves; if they, to add some more coins to their treasure, or acquire new honours, or procure some pleasure, sweat and toil, and live in a state of constant anxiety, though what they aim at is nothing more than a little dirt, or smoke, or a blast of wind, should we not labour incessantly to convert our miseries into imperishable treasures, our weeping into ineffable delight? Let us seek the love of God, increase in grace, and in it shall we find all things worth seeking: if you look for honours, it is the true glory; if riches, it is the queen of peace; if delights, it is eternal life. This taught and encouraged the poor to bless God in their toil. As far as he was concerned himself, he saw in everything the hand of that bountiful Father who arranges all things, as well prosperous as adverse, for the good of His creatures. And so his lips never uttered the slightest complaint, nor the least imprecation, let the result of his affairs be what it might; nor did he ever avail himself of fraud or deceit to improve his condition, in which he lived more happily than the rich, surrounded by all the advantages and commodities of earth. Content with his lot, he often fervently repeated his favourite expression: "Let us ever give thanks to God in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." In all his actions, in all his enterprises, in all his plans, in every event, whether he was praised or abused, when he rejoiced or suffered, when things turned out well or ill with him, he always uttered that ejaculation: "Thanks be to God, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Who can calculate the merits he must have thus acquired?

## III.

The Lord willed that the fragrance of virtues so heroic should penerate the cloister, and the religious admire the sweet aroma produced by a holy life cultivated in the world, when it opens its leaves to the dew of divine grace which falls from the hand of the celestial Gardener. When advanced in years, and unable to work, the Lord showed His solicitude for him by providing for his future subsistence. Vincent, abbot of the monastery of St. Juste of Lyons, of which city he was afterwards the zealous bishop, passing one time by Andace, a village in the neighbourhood, saw in the church our fervent artisan performing his customary devotions, and was particularly struck by his modest bearing, and the ardent piety which shone in his countenance. He called and spoke to him, and soon discovered the treasures of virtue hidden in his breast, and tested the deep knowledge he had of spiritual things, superior in many respects to that of educated and learned men. Thus does the Divine Spirit delight to exalt the humble. The abbot offered him a position in the monastery, which Galmier accepted, and there he spent the rest of his days, content to be able to dedicate himself more unreservedly to prayer and the exercises of piety. Very soon, by the heroic virtues he had cultivated in the world, he gained the estimation of his brethren and strangers. The inhabitants of the city, observing in the saint an active passion for the alleviation of the distressed, placed large sums at his disposal for the purpose.

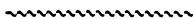
And Bishop Gaudric himself honoured the virtues of our holy artisan.

Even at this time there existed in some churches the office of subdeacon, instituted in the beginning of Christianity, to assist the deacons in their duties, to distribute alms to the poor, and console them in their pains and afflictions. To this object the Church, ever solicitous for the welfare of her children, dedicated a portion of the ecclesiastical rents. No one seemed more suited for this duty than the charitable locksmith, and the bishop appointed him to it, and conferred on him the order of subdeacon. The saint's humility was alarmed at the proposal, and prostrating himself at the prelate's feet, he besought him with tears to relieve him of the post. But it was useless, for as an obedient son he had to yield to the wishes of his diocesan. The Lord showed how pleasing to Him was the charity of His servant, and how He delighted in seeing him the minister of His providence to the poor and the needy. He daily sent him a flock of birds to eat out of his hands; and after feeding them the saint would dismiss them, asking them to sing the praises of God; and when they rose in the air chanting the glories of the Creator, Galmier would utter his sweet ejaculation: "Let us give thanks to God in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

His heart was now matured for heaven, full of indescribable merits acquired in the humble profession of locksmith. The science of the saints taught him to harmonise prayer with labour, the fulfilment of duty with the most accentuated perfection. The hour, then, came of paying tribute to death, for which he had prepared during life, by despising everything that could attach his heart to earth, and fixing his eyes on the eternal reward of the just in heaven. He died, as he had lived, in a saintly manner, delivering up his spirit to his Creator about the year 650. His mortal remains,

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buried in the monastery of St. Juste, soon became celebrated by the number of prodigies which the Lord wrought through his intercession, and by the growing number of pilgrims which flocked to his grave from all parts. His feast is celebrated on the 27th of February.



## ST. LUQUESE, RETAILER.

### I.

NOT far from Sienna, in a village called Caggiani, our saint, who was the son of decent parents, saw the light. What education he received from them is unknown, as also what sort of life he led in his childhood, though we may suppose it was edifying. The first thing we learn from his biographers is that while yet very young he contracted marriage with Bonadona, a girl of good reputation and better morals. Luquese was a man of noble aspect, affable, modest, urbane, and possessed of a good heart. The newly-married pair dedicated themselves to the business of retail dealers; and although the young man abhorred and avoided fraud and deceit, which many in his trade are accustomed to practise, yet, as he wished to rise in the world, he yielded to a reprehensible avarice in heaping up wealth, sometimes forgetting the divine service, and, above all, the relief of the poor. Caggiani, and, indeed, nearly all Italy, was in his time divided

into factions, called Guelphs and Gibellines, who hated each other to death. Whether on account of these divisions, as some say, or from motives of envy and resentment, Luquese found himself so persecuted in word and deed by an adversary, that to escape from him and live in peace he had to remove to a place where he should be less exposed to the shafts of his enmity, and consequently took up his residence in Poggi-bouzi. Here he followed his trade of retailer, absorbed in worldly gains, and caring little for the eternal. However, when thinking one day on the admirable beauty and order of the Universe, drawn from nothing by the omnipotent will of the Creator; comparing the brevity and uncertainty of the goods of this life with the eternity of the rewards or chastisements it entails, and, above all, admiring the infinite mercy of the Lord, who at all hours awaits with open arms the return of the strayed sheep, he was illuminated by a ray of divine grace, and clearly discerned the nets which the devil spreads for the incautious who allow themselves to be dazzled by the fugitive brilliancy of honours and riches. He closed not his ears and his heart to the divine call; he indulged in hope, and resolved to immediately abandon his present business, which, considering his natural bent, was to him a deadly rock, and seek another means of living less exposed to danger and sin. He became a grain merchant. In the beginning he was far from committing the slightest injustice, being loyal and sincere in all his bargains, sometimes even generously opening his hand to the needy. But as avarice had cast so deep roots in his heart, he began, little by little, to allow himself to be so mastered by the hunger for gold that he lost no chance of monopolising the wheat in order to more securely increase his gains. He was not as far from danger as he imagined. Not all are suited for all businesses, though they be indifferent and easily harmonised

with virtue. And so it is no way strange that one may meet with death where others find life. Observing, then, that his heart was easily attached to the fleeting goods of this life, to the detriment of his soul, Luquese resolved to entirely abandon that line of trade, to him so dangerous, and completely dedicate himself to the service of the Omnipotent. Moved, then, by these salutary thoughts and resolutions, which were knocks the Lord gave at the door of his soul to possess Himself entirely of it, he began to frequent the churches, to take pleasure in good conversations, and to avoid vain and dangerous meetings. In fine, the heart of Luquese was gained by the Lord, to serve whom is to reign.

To divest himself the quicker of his love of riches and serve God with less embarrassment, he sold all he possessed; and purchasing a farm sufficient for the support of his family, he divided the remainder among the poor. He had first told his wife of his resolution, who received the news with eyes bathed in tears of consolation, blessing God for having inspired him with such thoughts, and assuring him she was delighted at the prospect of their new life. Thus encouraged, he reduced, as we said, his resolutions to practice, and in future thought only of avoiding the dangers of the world, and pleasing the Lord God daily more and more. He alternated the cultivation of his farm, for the support of himself and the indigent, with various exercises of piety, mingled with prayer and fervent aspirations. At this time the zealous St. Francis of Assisium happened to pass by the place, with the object of extending his Institute, and forming congregations of Tertiaries, in which married people could, to a certain degree, follow the evangelical counsels, and participate in some of the graces granted to the religious. The first whom the holy Founder enlisted in his ranks were Luquese and his wife, who immediately enrolled themselves in an institution so salutary. Our retailer



distinguished himself among the members, not only by his faithful observance of the rules, but also by the exercise of all virtues. But among his other virtues—his humility, his patience, his modesty, his meekness—the first place was taken by his charity to the poor, and his piety to God.

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## II.

In place of the idle amusements which he had formerly indulged in with such relish, his delight was now to visit the hospitals, to console and comfort the sick, to tenderly wash their hands, and assist with a father's anxiety in the cure of their most repugnant sores. Attentive and diligent was he in the cultivation of his farm, not for the purpose of heaping up wealth, but in order to have wherewith to entertain pilgrims, and provide necessaries for the poor of Jesus Christ. He was so prodigal to the indigent, that, forgetful of his own necessities, he had eyes only for those of his neighbours and he rested not till he saw them satisfied, though for the purpose he should fast and reduce himself to misery. His wife, though she was a fervent Christian, and rejoiced at her husband's change of life, yet, as she looked with human eyes on that apparent waste, began to complain of his excessive liberality, and to call him a rash and imprudent man. The charitable farmer was silent under the rebuke, for a grain of peace and grace is worth a sackful of mundane reputation; but the Lord took up his defence. It happened one day that a crowd of poor having come to his door and received each his

usual piece of bread, the provisions were completely exhausted. In a few hours another indigent crowd appeared. Luquese told his wife to give them their customary allowance. "God bless you," said she, "where shall I get it when not a crumb remains?" Luquese answered with a smile, "You shall get it in the cupboard." "Not a bit," said she. "Don't say so," answered he; "for He who fed in the desert so many thousands on five loaves and two fishes will not fail to provide something for our brethren." Bonadona went grumbling to the cupboard for the purpose of confounding him; but finding it unexpectedly full, she ran and threw herself at her husband's feet, asking pardon for her obstinacy, and blessing the providence of the Lord, so generous to His own. Animated by this prodigy, these charitable spouses ever after rivalled each other in liberality and mercy to the poor, and served them as they would Jesus Christ, convinced that He would remunerate them in heaven, where He rewards even a cup of water given in His name.

Luquese was not content with what his farm supplied; but generously trampling on human respect, he went himself from door to door to ask alms to relieve the needy, particularly those ashamed to beg. Nor did he refuse toil and fatigue when necessary for the alleviation of the poor. Knowing that on the banks of the Umbron, in the height of summer, there were many sick, and almost destitute, he went to their relief with a donkey laden with medicines and provisions; and such the tenderness and sweetness with which he treated them, that, his excesses of charity being already known in that neighbourhood, many recovered at the very sight of the saint. Not seldom he returned from these expeditions laden with spoils. Sometimes he carried a sick child in his arms, caressing it like a father, sometimes carrying a poor man in fever, or conducting several to

the hospital, that they might be better cared. It was a very tender scene to behold him surrounded by these poor people, leading one by the hand, supporting another on his arm, or balancing him on his donkey, consoling all, animating all, imbuing all in Christian maxims, that they might be their balsam in the hour of tribulation.

On one occasion he was met by a young man, who wondered to see him carrying a sick person on his back with two others half convalescent by his side, and said to him: "Luquese, what the devil sort of abscess is that you have on your back?" "Miserable man," answered the saint, "do you not know that the poor represent Jesus Christ, and not the devil?" The young man was about making some other unbecoming remark but his voice stuck in his throat, and he was struck dumb in punishment of his sin. When he found the hand of God on him he began to weep and give signs of his sorrow, indicating to the charitable Luquese to intercede for him with the Almighty. The saint understood his gestures, and remembering the precept of Jesus Christ, that we should pray for those who calumniate and persecute us, interceded for him, and the Lord restored him his speech, for which the young man expressed his deep gratitude. "Go now," said the saint, "and keep a better tongue in your head, and offend not in thought, or word, or act that Lord who can punish you in this world and the next."

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## III.

It is thus good Christians repay injury and insult. As far as Luquese was concerned, what he felt most when outraged was the offence offered to that loving Father who delivered up to death His only-begotten and beloved Son for the salvation of the Universe. This zeal for the glory of God was constantly burning in his heart. Hence, not satisfied with succouring his brethren in their corporal necessities, he always gave with his alms salutary advice and warning, intended to make them conceive a hatred of sin, the source of all evils, and induce them to love and serve God, who alone can make them happy. He abhorred backbiting, cursing, and loose talk, and quietly and gently corrected those guilty of them. The Lord sometimes marked His sanction of his burning zeal by discovering to him the secrets of hearts. When walking once to Massa, on the banks of the Umbron, some loose young men, without the fear of God, saw Luquese coming in the distance on his ass, saying his prayers, as was usual with him, on the road when he had no one to talk to about holy things. Like Joseph's brothers at sight of the dreamer, they determined to play a trick on him, abuse him in word and act, and so try his patience. But the saint, when he came to them, showed them he was aware of their intentions, and told them God was his protector, with whom they should have to contend and not with him. On this they were astounded, and threw themselves at his feet, begging his pardon, which he freely granted them, giving them at the same time salutary advice to change their life and keep the divine commandments.

The devout Luquese gave men in this and in all the virtues a good example. Extremely given to the exercises of piety, he applied himself specially to prayer and the frequenting of the sacraments, like one who knew well that without these two things it is almost impossible to fly to the heights of perfection, without falling into the claws of the infernal kite. Meditation was his usual bread. Besides the spells he employed daily in dwelling on the eternal truths of death, judgment, hell, and heaven, as also on the pains of Jesus Christ in His dolorous passion; besides keeping his mind frequently employed on salutary and devout thoughts of charity and mercy; in all parts he knew how to find God, and glorify Him with burning acts of love. At home and abroad, in society or in solitude, in labour or in innocent amusement, he sought the glory of the Lord and the advantage of his soul. With deep devotion and modesty he attended the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and other divine offices; he tried as far as possible to make his wife and children follow his footsteps, and, despite a life so holy and immaculate, he twice a week approached the tribunal of penance to bewail his past faults, and prepare himself to receive the Lamb without spot. Humbly, reverently, and fervently he knelt at the Sacred Table, and when the King of kings was lodged in his breast he retired to a corner to treat in seclusion of the affairs of his soul, to commune with his God with greater recollection, and thank Him for the immense favour just conferred on him. There did he find that consolation which caused him to shed tears; there that reward, the prelude of what he should eternally enjoy in the city of the just. When he reflected that he had within his breast that Lord who fills all, rules all, sustains all, vivifies all, perfects all; when he adored Him for whom the angelic hierarchies burn with love, whom they serve and exalt, before whom they

humble themselves and are filled with dread ; on one hand, full of profound humility, he was confounded, and on the other, inebriated with love and gratitude, he blessed and praised Him as the source and plenitude of all being, and the life of all goodness and grandeur and beauty. With what strength he arose from that divine table to plod over the briers and thorns in the way of the holy cross ! And no light one was his ; for besides the sufferings he underwent in the above-mentioned journeys, and those which he voluntarily sought in fasting, penances, and privations, with which he subdued his body, and made it entirely subject to the spirit, he also occasionally received crosses, sometimes from God, sometimes from men—crosses not a few, which the saint accepted with edifying resignation and patience. It is well to repeat, aye, a thousand times, that the cross is the patrimony of the saints, and that to imagine oneself a saint without the cross is to build castles in the air.

The Lord had blessed his marriage with two children, in whose Christian education Luquese took the deepest pains. Fearing, however, that some day they might be blinded by the tinsel of worldly goods and pleasures, it appears that he asked the Lord to free them from the rocks and dangers of this tempestuous sea, and the Lord, hearing his prayer, took them to the port of salvation. Bonadona continued to be his companion in his fervent piety, as she had been previously in his juvenile vanity. Their union and peace were the model of those which should exist among Christian consorts : never had they the smallest scold or dispute, they mutually tried to make each other happy ; what one said the other approved of ; they put their face against all conversation that might wound their peace and concord ; and, if sometimes they might hold opposite opinions, they consulted someone who could direct them, if the matter was of any

moment; but if trifling, they mutually agreed to drop the subject.

If they were an example of union in life, they were no less so in death. They both fell ill at the same time, and Bonadona's sickness increasing, her husband consoled her, and immediately procured for her the administration of the sacraments of the Church. Luquese also got worse, and he made them carry him to his wife's side to assist her in her agony, and bid her adieu before death. "My beloved companion," he said to her, "you know well how much we have loved each other, how united we have lived, how we have stimulated each other to serve God, as we should; it is only right, then, that we go together to enjoy the eternal delights of glory; wait for me a little, till I shall have received what you did, and then we shall go to heaven together." After making the sign of the cross over his wife, they carried him to bed, where the holy sacraments were administered to him. Fortified now with the Viaticum, he went to his wife who was about expiring, and had the consolation of seeing her die in his arms. Then he spoke to the bystanders, animated them to serve God with all their strength, as the only means of leaving this exile in peace, and finally pronouncing the sweet names of Jesus and Mary, he flew to Bonadona, to sing with her for ever the eternal praises of the Lord. He died on the 29th of April, 1260. They gave him the burial of a saint, the whole town going to venerate his mortal remains; the Lord also honoured his memory by performing numerous prodigies through the intercession of this poor retailer and gardener consecrated to His service.

ST. MARTINIANUS, ARMOURER; AND ST.  
MAXIMA AND COMPANIONS, SLAVES,  
MARTYRS.

I.

VIRTUE is in itself so beautiful and attractive that even those who persecute and exteriorly despise it pay it in their heart the homage of praise, and often cannot help reverencing it publicly, spite of the wail of their disordered passions. This palpable truth was seen in the case of our glorious virgin St. Maxima, a distinguished martyr of the Church of Jesus Christ. This chaste virgin lived in the province of Carthage, like a pure white lily on an impure dunghill, when the scourge of the Lord fell on that Sodomitical people. The infamous vice paraded the streets unblushingly: the sanctity of marriage was outraged, adultery applauded, religious continence mocked, and young men walked the public ways tricked out in feminine garb and adornments, to publicly proclaim their own wickedness. Such degradation has ever brought down on kingdoms and cities the thunder-bolt of divine vengeance. Genseric was the instrument now chosen for the purpose by Divine Providence, and like a tempestuous cloud borne by the hurricane, he crossed the Straits of Gibraltar, and fell on that corrupted race. Never did invasion spill so much blood, or spread



such desolation. The Vandals, fanatical Arians, naturally cruel, and enemies to the Catholics, carried their inhumanity to all extremes; along their route nothing remained but trophies of the tempest—carcasses, ashes, death;—they dismantled all the fortified towns, made slaves of their inhabitants, without distinction of class, condition, or sex, and loaded the shoulders of these armies of slaves with their booty; they drove them with whips, as they would mules or donkeys; they tore the children from their mothers' breasts, and before their very eyes dashed out their brains against the walls; the sacred chant of the churches was hushed, and at the stroke of their truly Vandalic barbarism the marvels of art were reduced to ruin. Thus did God chastise that people, who would not hear the voice of their pastors inviting them to penance, or rather He blotted it from the roll of nations, as formerly He did to the cities of Pentapolis. What a sad lesson, unlearned by governors and governed! Let us learn that of virtue whenever we may see it shine. In spite of such cruelty and barbarity, and notwithstanding their Arian fanaticism, the Vandals were continent, abhorred lust, condemned prostitution to death, and persecuted without quarter those who trafficked in that infamous vice. There were also among Catholics Christians worthy of the name, who sealed their faith with their blood, or preserved it pure in spite of the sanguinary persecution; on all sides were bishops, priests, virgins consecrated to God, who were, some of them mutilated, others loaded with chains, not a few starved to death, and the majority reduced to vile slavery. Of the last were our glorious heroes.

When Carthage was taken by those barbarians under Genseric, in 439, Maxima incurred the same fate as the others, and was handed over as a captive to one of the chiefs of division of the army of the Arian king. There is no evil that does not come for good; and Maxima

discovered in her slavery a mine of celestial treasures. Endowed with great exterior beauty and grace, the lively reflex of that which adorned her soul, she did her work with such modesty, diligence, and cleanliness, that in a short time she gained the goodwill of the doughty Vandal; she was always found gay and industrious, ready to please in everything, which offended not against the law of God. As she was advanced in the school of Christ, she had learned well the lesson taught by St. Paul to slaves and servants, when he wrote: "Servants, be obedient to them that are your lords, according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the simplicity of your heart, as to Christ. Not serving to the eye, as it were pleasing men, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With a good will serving, as to the Lord, and not to men. Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man shall do, the same shall he receive from the Lord, whether he be bond or free." Directing all her actions to this end, as soon as **Maxima** found her master wanted anything done she ran at once to do it. By this means she acquired such an ascendant over him that he confided to her the direction of the house, not as if she were a slave, but its owner.

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## II.

At the same time a young man, also a slave, lived in the establishment, kept there perhaps on account of his skill in making all kinds of arms, and he also had merited for some reason or other the estimation of the Vandal; his habits and tastes, however, resembled those

of the servant of God very little. Martinianus or Maturianus (for he is called both ways) was all of this world; whilst Maxima only thought of pleasing God, he pursued not the good path for fear of talk, whilst such talk only served her as a stimulus to progress in virtue; pomp and vanity were his idols, whilst she found delight only in prayer and retirement. However, the barbarian warrior, anxious to reward the fidelity and good conduct of Maxima, give a proof of being pleased by the labours of Maturianus and secure the services of both, conceived the project of uniting them in wedlock. The youth, enamoured of her beauty and virtue, received his master's proposition with transports of joy; but the servant of God, without venturing to discover her mind, lowered her eyes full of virginal modesty, and clearly, though mutely, gave them to understand how different her aspirations were. However, the marriage took place, as arranged by the barbarian. Maxima long before had consecrated her virginity to the Lord, and desired no other spouse; hence, in her interior she earnestly asked her good Jesus to help her to preserve that inestimable treasure. They had retired from the nuptial banquet, and when Martinianus was going to give her a mark of his affection, Maxima retired from him, and said in a tone burning with charity: "Brother Martinianus, touch me not. My chastity is consecrated to Jesus Christ; Him I took for spouse, and after giving myself to Him, I can receive no man as husband." The armourer was astonished at this; but Maxima spoke to him with such modesty and efficacy, and besides the Lord lent power to her words, and the Holy Ghost so moved his heart, that he willingly consented to her desires. "If you wish to have a share in the grace with which the Almighty enriched me," she said, "it is enough to desire it in earnest. Let me continue the spouse of Jesus Christ; consecrate yourself like me to the divine service; promise

to preserve chastity intact, and we shall wear in heaven the crown of virgins, accompanying the immaculate Lamb, and singing to Him a hymn, which the other blessed cannot sing."

Martinianus yielded to the entreaties and observations of the saint, and resolved not only to be the custodian of Maxima's virginity by passing in the eyes of the world as her husband, but also to consecrate by vow his own virginity to the Lord, and dedicate himself entirely to the divine service, in order to participate one day in his companion's crown. Thus did they live like sister and brother, each occupied in his or her respective duties, and whenever the devil tempted them, the image of Jesus crucified for the sake of men gave them strength to resist his attacks. Charity, in itself a lively and burning flame, soon makes itself felt by all who come under its influence. Martinianus was full of joy, and the fire of charity daily increasing in his breast, by means of the holy sacraments, he could not do less than communicate it to all those with whom he had dealings. Under the same roof, slaves like himself, lived three brothers of his, one of them called Saturnianus or Saturanianus—the names of the others are unknown—engaged perhaps in assisting Martinianus in the fabrication of arms. To these he first communicated the joy which possessed him, and persuaded them to seek for the treasure he had found, completely renounce the world, and follow the footsteps of Jesus Christ; they all willingly agreed, but it appeared to them difficult to preserve intact that treasure in the midst of the dangers of slavery. How could they escape from the difficulty?

Through an unexpected stretch of generosity the barbarians had left some convents of men and women standing. The four brothers had the monastery of Tabraca near them, in which, under the paternal government

of Andrew, discipline and fervour flourished; and not far off was also a convent of religious observants. Who knew but perhaps in these homes of peace and virtue, they should find an asylum and liberty? This doubt awakened hope in their heart, and after recommending it to God with faith and constancy, and meditating on it with becoming seriousness, they resolved to take refuge in flight; they made their arrangements with great caution and care; on the first fitting occasion they departed secretly by night, and after accompanying Maxima to a convent of virgins, they retired to the monastery of Tabraca, where they were received with religious charity.

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### III.

The Vandal raved in anger as soon as he heard of what happened. He ordered the fugitive slaves to be sought for in all directions, employing promises, bribes, threats, and all the means he could dispose of; they were soon discovered and brought before him, and he first ordered them to be imprisoned, and cruelly tortured; he afterwards solicited them, not only to stain the chastity they had vowed to the Lord, but to renounce Catholicity, and receive Arian baptism. But all in vain, for now they felt the consolation that they were suffering, not as runaway slaves, but as martyrs of chastity, and defenders of the divinity of Jesus Christ: they suffered all with invincible valour and constancy. When King Genserik heard of what happened, in place of tempering their master's harshness and cruelty with the benignity and clemency which so well become powerful monarchs, he

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ordered their punishment to be continued till they should absolutely submit to the barbarian's will. They were flogged with knotted sticks with teeth like those of a saw, till the blood gushed out in streams from the cruel wounds; and Maxima was put on the rack in a dark dungeon till her limbs were almost disjointed. But the Lord not only comforted his servants, but even glorified them in presence of that impious people. In spite of their cruel torments, they awoke every morning free from wound or scar, and ready for new contests. This miracle, repeated several days, brought many Catholics to see and console them, and sometimes in their presence the rack on which the saint was laid would crumble as if it were dried clay—a prodigy which Victor himself, who wrote their lives, heard of from the mouth of one of her guards, who swore to it on oath.

The Vandal was not softened by such visible prodigies, and the Lord, in order to liberate his servants, laid his angry hand on the house. He sent his exterminating angel to extinguish the impious family, killing the father and children, and every living animal about the house. Only the desolate widow, now reduced to misery, escaped. Fearing to keep the servants of God about the place, she made a present of them to Sesaon, the king's relative, who received them with thanks. But God desired their liberty, and He scourged the rash man who unworthily kept under control the elect of the Lord. By divine disposition the devil began to torment their new master's children and servants. Full of alarm at what he saw, he told the story to the king, who prudently advised him to set them at liberty, and he took the advice. He sent them to the states of a pagan prince called Capsur, who ruled over a province near the African deserts called Cabrapinta, and was an ally of the Vandals. Thither the four brothers were conducted, having thus to separate from their beloved spiritual guide and mother

**Maxima.** The inhabitants of Cabrapinta were yet buried in the darkness of paganism, offered sacrifices to the devil, and had never heard of the Christian name. God employed our armourers to sow the seed of the Gospel in those lands. In the midst of their labours they held conversation with the people, and such was the impression they made by their maxims and consistent conduct, that a great many of those barbarians resolved to embrace the name and faith of Jesus Christ.

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#### IV.

But as our saints sought not their own glory but that of God, and the discipline of the Church then, as now, did not permit lay persons to administer the sacrament of baptism except in the case of urgent necessity, they resolved on sending for some ministers of God, who might cultivate the soil broken by them, and nourish the plants with the water of baptism and the dew of the Divine Word. But this was a difficult enterprise. All the churches of Africa were afflicted by the Arian persecution; those of Spain were also under the yoke of the Suevi and Goths, also heretics; and a portion of Gaul lay under the yoke of the Arians. The envoys, however, departed, and after surmounting not a few obstacles, they at last reached Rome and told the Supreme Pontiff of the progress of the Gospel in those distant countries, asking at the same time for suitable labourers to complete the work initiated by the indefatigable armourers. The Vicar of Jesus Christ was rejoiced at the good news, which came to mitigate somewhat the profound grief he felt at the ravages of Arianism, and immediately sent

thema pastor with some ministers to feed that flock on the pastures of life.

In the meantime our armourer, with the assistance of his three brothers, alternating the duties of his trade with the labours of an apostle, and perhaps turning his workshop into a school and a temple of the Most High, daily made new conquests, and enlisted proselytes under the banner of Jesus Christ. Who can resist a heart burning with zeal for the Divine glory? By the time the ministers arrived the temples of the idols were deserted, the abominable sacrifices had almost ceased, and a magnificent structure was built for the worship of the true God, where an immense number of neophytes were regenerated, converted by the waters of baptism from ravening wolves into meek lambs.

Capsur informed the monarch of what was going on; and Lucifer, irritated by his defeat and the glorious triumph of the cross, inflamed the tyrant's heart anew with rage against our saints. He consequently ordered the four brothers to be tied by the feet, face to face, to a chariot and drawn through furze, briars, and rocks till dead. When the chariot began to move, the martyrs could be heard thus reciprocally animating each other to the contest:—"Brothers, pray for me to the Lord, and bless Him; my wishes are satisfied; this is the road which leads to glory." And in the midst of these unheard-of torments they rejoiced at seeing the gates of glory open to them, and sang hymns of praise and glory to the Lord till they entered victorious into eternal life. God glorified his servants by working many miracles in the place of their martyrdom. A bishop called Faustus Baronitanus assures us that he saw a blind woman suddenly recover her sight. But like prodigies, the valour of the martyrs and the conversion of so many infidels only served to increase Genseric's fury against the Church.



We know not whether Maxima also sealed her faith with her blood. It is only recorded that, retiring to a monastery after obtaining her liberty, she reached, loaded with good works, an advanced age and was yet alive in 487, having under her direction a great number of fervent virgins, as Victor tells us, who saw her, and records it in his history of the Vandals. The Roman Martyrology places her feast, together with that of the holy armourer and his brothers, on the 16th of October.



## ST. FLORUS AND ST. LAURUS, STONE- CUTTERS AND MASONS.

### I.


GLORIOUS is the memory of the distinguished saints, Laurus and Florus, in the annals of the Church, as well Greek as Latin, on account of the valour with which they spilled their blood in defence of the faith pledged in holy baptism. They were twin-brothers and natives of Constantinople. Imbued in the maxims of the Gospel, there was nothing in their eyes more precious than virtue, nothing they should not despise, no risk they should not run, to preserve the precious jewel of Divine grace. Born of poor parents, they earned their bread as stone-cutters and masons, a trade they learned, together with the most exemplary virtue, under the direction of the *martyrs* Proclus and Maximus. The latter having given

their lives in testimony of their religious belief, their apprentices, whether to escape the rage of their persecutors, or to seek for more lucrative employment, left Constantinople, then called Byzantium, and went to Ulpiana in Sclavonia. Here they followed their trade in the house of President Licon himself, and continued the fervent practice of the Christian virtues. We know not the exact epoch of these events, nor the precise occasion of their martyrdom. However, respectable authors, taking it from ancient manuscripts, relate it thus :

After some time Licinius, through the president, called Florus and Laurus, now celebrated for their skill in their trade, to superintend the construction of a temple which he intended to build in honour of the false gods. We know not who this Licinius was, whom the acts call the son of the Empress Elphidia ; nor do we know when he lived, though some believe he was the companion of Constantine. The pagan wished to build a masterpiece, which should transmit his fame to posterity by the beauty of the edifice and the liberality of the founder ; and he could find no one more capable of carrying out his plans than the twin-brothers. Licon sent them at once, and they were received by Licinius with especial marks of benevolence. The plans were arranged, and the foundations laid, and our good masons commenced the building with the hope that not the gods of paganism but the true God should be adored in it. The founder provided them with all things necessary with a prodigality worthy of a better object, showered favours on them to spur them on, and promised them large premiums in case they should complete the work in a given time. The servants of God worked like blacks, as they say, not for the sake of hoarding up perishable riches, but that they might have the more to distribute to the poor, to whom they gave the proceeds of their toil. Besides sanctifying

their work with an end so laudable and holy, they did not neglect labouring directly at that other much more noble and splendid edifice, a spiritual temple by means of the sanctification of their souls. For this purpose they spent a great part of the night in prayer, and had fixed times for other exercises of piety. From this came their burning zeal for the extension of the Catholic faith, which the Lord rewarded with singular favours and miracles.

It happened once that when Alexander, son of the priest of the idols, was viewing the works, a chip of stone struck him in the eye and burst it. The enraged father accused our saints before Licinius, and demanded vengeance; but after examining the case, he was convinced of their complete innocence, and dismissed the charge against them. The good brothers took the revenge of saints on Anastasius, as the priest was called. By their genial manners they won the good will of young Alexander, convinced him of the vanity of the gods before whom the pagans were not ashamed to prostrate themselves, and having imbued him in the dogmas of our holy faith, persuaded him that only in the Christian religion could eternal life be found. Illumined by divine light, and moved by the grace of the Lord, he received holy baptism, and with it his lost eye. Astounded at sight of the prodigy wrought in his son's favour, Anastasius, in his turn illuminated by a ray of Divine mercy, also renounced paganism and joined the religion of the Crucified. Thus did the good and zealous stonecutters repay injuries. Nor were they less diligent in diffusing the regenerating doctrine among their dependents, availing themselves of every opportunity to instruct the ignorant, bring back the wandering, animate the good, catechise the pagans, and attach all to the Divine service, as the only source of true happiness.



## II.

The temple of the gods was finished to the satisfaction of Licinius, and the statues placed in it on either hand. Florus and Laurus, saddened on one hand by the blindness of the idolaters, and vexed on the other by the triumph of hell, to which they had to contribute, impelled by heaven, collected all their workmen and all the poor Christians, among whom they were accustomed to divide what they earned, and went at night to the temple, singing psalms with lighted tapers in their hands and preceded by the sign of our redemption. When they reached it they pulled down the statues and broke them into pieces. They spent the whole night at this, singing sacred songs, and in the end planted the cross on the ruins of the idols.

The following day, when Licinius heard of the daring act of the Christians, full of indignation, he ordered them all to be seized and cast into a burning furnace, except Florus and Laurus, the ringleaders. Gladly did those brave champions die for the faith, delighted to exchange their present poverty for the infinite riches of eternal glory, the pickaxe for the palm of victory, this exile strewn with dangers and troubles for that land where complete security and rest do reign.

The prime movers in the affair—Florus and Laurus—were called before Licinius, who promised to pardon them on condition of their offering sacrifice to the gods. They indignantly rejected such an offer, and then Licinius ordered them to be tortured

without mercy. The obedient executioners soon made their whips crack and drew torrents of blood from their wounds. The tyrant had a certain regard for them on account of their good qualities, and was anxious to overcome their tenacity, or rather their constancy in the faith; but seeing that he gained nothing either by promises, or threats, or punishment, he sent them under guard to the proconsul.

Happy did the twins consider themselves when loaded with the Cross of Jesus Christ; and thinking more on the misfortune of their conductors than on their own wounds, they resolved to conquer their guard and open to them the way of eternal life. Ever unanimous in their good desires, after recommending the matter with great fervour to God, they tried by their manner to gain their good will. Finding them well disposed, they explained to them the eternal felicity of the just and the unending torments of the damned, the sanctity of the dogmas of the Christian religion, the miracles wrought by the Almighty in its confirmation. Illumined by a ray of Divine grace they abandoned their errors and became Christians. Yet the saintly twins presented themselves to the proconsul: "Here we are," they said to him, "after finishing the temple you sent us to build; we broke the statues of the infamous and impotent gods, we sanctified it with the holy cross, and now we have just enlisted in our ranks the soldiers of our escort. We await your pleasure." Licon ordered them all to be put in prison, and the following morning commanded Florus and Laurus to appear in his presence.

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## III.

The president employed every soft measure to make them adore the idols; but convinced that this line of action could not seduce their hearts from the Catholic faith, he threatened them, saying: "If this very day you do not burn incense to the gods, I will condemn you to death after torturing you." "Do as you like," answered the saints. "Do you want us to disobey God in order to please men who are to be the food of worms? Lose no time, for we are ready to be quartered sooner than offend the God of armies; so do not tire yourself beating the air with promises and threats." Then the tyrant ordered them to be thrown into a deep well, that the Christians might not find them. When they reached the place of punishment, kneeling down, they said: "God of virtues, hear our prayer, and grant that this well may be to us the bath of regeneration: receive our souls in peace, and bear us with Thee to the region of the living, where we may glorify Thee for ages without end." When their prayer was ended, a voice was heard on high, saying: "Come, workers in my vineyard, and I will give you rest and repose." Animated by this mysterious voice, they were thrown into the well and covered with rubbish, to hide their mortal remains from human eye.

We said that the date of the martyrdom of our saints was unknown, but some say it was in the time of the unfortunate companion of the conqueror of Maxentius. So says the Slav-Russian martyrology, and not without some show of reason; for considering the place of their

suffering and the name of the tyrant, we can find no other Licinius to whom to attribute the death of our holy masons. He and Constantine the Great had promulgated an edict in favour of the Christians, granted them several immunities, and declared themselves their protectors; but Licinius afterwards turning against them through his disagreement with his brother-in-law, Constantine, began to persecute the disciples of Jesus, particularly the prelates, and openly protect paganism. Who knows but it was before he began this persecution that he called on the illustrious masons to build the temple at which they so zealously laboured, believing in the consul's conversion? What is certain is that from 319 to 324 he fiercely pursued the innocent faithful. In this persecution died St. Basil and St. Blas, the former Bishop of Amasea and Pontus, and the latter of Sebaste, in Armenia; and at this time also the famous Forty Martyrs of Sebaste received their crown. Seven women were killed because they were collecting the drops of the blood of the confessors of the faith. This rage against the faithful, together with some political questions, inflamed anew hostilities between Constantine and the tyrant, who had made himself detested by his avarice, his cruelty, and his lust. Great were the preparations made on either side, presaging a terrible and sanguinary war. Constantine had one hundred and thirty thousand men on sea and land, Crispus, his son, commanding the fleet, and Licinius had one hundred and seventy thousand men under him.

The conqueror of Maxentius, to show that he hoped for victory more from his confidence in God than from human power, had bishops in his camp, and carried before him the ensign of the Cross, or Labarum, by the aid of which he had overthrown Maxentius before the walls of Rome. This glorious symbol of victory was kept in a tent separated from the camp, whither the emperor

retired on the eve of the battle to implore the aid of the God of armies in prayer and fasting.

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#### IV.

Licinius laughed at all this, and had with him soothsayers, magi, and false priests, who offered sacrifice to the idols to know the issue of the battle, and they all promised him a certain victory. Full of confidence he retired with his intimates to a wood consecrated to the gods, and sacrificed victims to them for the happy issue of the contest. Afterwards he said to the bystanders:—"Here, my friends, are the gods of our fathers, whom we venerate as they taught us. Our adversary has abandoned them for some strange God, whose infamous sign profanes his banners. Now we shall see who is in error. If this strange God of Constantine's, whom we mock, gives him the victory, in spite of our advantages and superior numbers, why, we must acknowledge Him; but if we conquer, as we are sure to do, we will declare bitter war on the impious wretches who reject our religion."

Licinius was advantageously encamped on a hill near Adrianople, confiding in his gods and oracles, when he was attacked by Constantine with a vigour he little expected, and the Cross was victorious. Licinius left thirty thousand men on the field, the rest seeking safety in flight. Constantine pursued him to Byzantium, and from Byzantium to Calcedon. Here he again engaged him in battle and slew more than one hundred thousand



men. He besieged him in Nicomedia, where, finding himself undone, the proud tyrant presented himself to the conqueror with suppliant mien, resigned the gilt purple, and acknowledged him as his emperor, asking pardon for the past. Constantine consented on account of his sister Constantia, wife of the conquered, and sent him to Thessalonica, where entering on new intrigues and conspiracies he fell by the executioner's hand, and thus ended the last of the persecutors of Catholicity. The blood of the just clamours to heaven for vengeance, and the Lord never closes His ears to its cries.


When Constantine was sole master of the empire, and the Catholic religion flourished in all parts under his protection, the venerable remains of our stonecutters were found and translated with great magnificence to Constantinople, where a monastery was built under their invocation. The Roman Martyrology makes mention of these glorious confessors on the 18th of August. Thus does the Lord glorify the humble and transmit their persecutors to the execration of posterity.

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VENERABLE ANNA GARCIA RUBIA, HELPER,  
GLEANER, AND NURSE.


I.

A CHRISTIAN man and wife named Alonso Carboneras and Maria Rubia, whom the Lord blessed with numerous offspring, lived in Honrubia, a little village situated in




the diocese of Cuenca, and watered by the river Incar. Among their sons and daughters was our Anna, who from her infancy gave clear signs of what she should be in future, for she was extremely simple, humble, recollected, and modest, an enemy to all vanity and display, and inclined to piety and virtue. Without overstepping in the slightest degree her means or resources, she ever took pleasure in being clean and tidy; but she did not do it with the intention of pleasing men, much less with the object of making a good match, for she only wanted to please God and satisfy her parents. But the latter, when she arrived at a suitable age, urged her to marry, and proposed to her a young man of good qualities named Francis Velazquez. The poor girl at first refused, but when she heard that his mother was a woman of great virtue and piety she consented and married him. She lived with her mother-in-law on the most amicable terms, and the house appeared to be rather a convent of nuns than the home of married women. Instead of disputing and contending like many in their position, they vied with each other in doing good and relieving each other of work and care.

Convinced of the immense advantage of the spiritual exercises, their first care was to perform them with exactness and diligence. At first Anna's principal prayer was vocal, which she was constantly engaged in when her occupations permitted. During her whole life she was very fond of the Rosary. She might be frequently seen with her beads in her hand, absorbed in its mysteries, and by this means she gradually rose to the holy exercise of meditation. She was also very mortified; she fasted frequently, particularly on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. She wore haircloth during the day and practised other penances. Her good mother-in-law encouraged these good dispositions, and from the first tried to imbue her with her own spirit: with this object she gave



her a taste for mental prayer, and knowing its great utility exhorted her to frequent the sacraments. If the old woman's desire of improving Anna was great, more lively still was the latter's anxiety to learn. In this way she lived in great peace twelve years, when it pleased the Lord to call her husband. Like a good wife she felt the blow very much, but knowing it to be God's will, she tranquilly resigned herself. As soon as she found herself a widow she went on her knees and made a vow of perpetual chastity to prevent all further attempts to make her marry again, desiring for spouse only Jesus Christ, her sole good. And what union can there be stronger or more delightful than that of a soul with her beloved Jesus? Compared to this Divine union the matrimonial one of men is only a shadow and figure. The latter is a worldly union, the former a spiritual union between God and His creature: the latter raises the wife to the dignity of the husband, but does not transform her; the former raises a miserable slave above all created grandeur, and besides makes her just, beautiful, and holy like God; the latter gives a name and a title to the fleeting things of a vain world; the former confers a real and true right to the possession of the eternal kingdom of glory. How could Anna desire other spouse than Jesus, of whom she was enamoured? In Him she could dread no infidelity, for His word is enduring, and He surpasses all the spouses of the world in loyalty and attention; nor separation from her beloved, for the bond which unites the soul to God is not severed by death, but rather becomes closer on the part of the creature, who alone could break it by sin; nor sterility, for the soul united to God is prolific in good works, an offspring the more amiable the more noble they are, which cause not the mother pain or sadness, nor expose her to death, but rather communicate to her eternal life, and the ineffable joy of a good conscience.



## II.

Betrothed to Jesus, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law thought only of pleasing the Divine Spouse, and continued to edify the simple neighbourhood with the aroma of their virtues. Mutual charity, which made them the finished model of Christian union, particularly shone in them. However, God thought well to separate them by taking to Himself the old woman to crown her with glory in reward of her virtues. Anna felt her loss, we may be sure. Her sadness, too, was increased by the want of her industrious co-operation in her needy circumstances; but she depended on her daily earning for the support of her family. When the time of mourning was up she laid aside her widow's weeds and put on a dress of coarse kersey which she constantly wore, except when sick, and even then under the express orders of her confessor. In this state all her cares were reduced to her own sanctification and the Christian education of her children; and as there was no one at home to interfere with her penances, she subjected herself to such excessive rigour, that it might serve as an example to many solitaries of the desert. When talking with people who could help her in the path of virtue she used to show her hunger for mortification by saying: "To wear haircloth during the day and while walking about, oh! that is nothing; anyone could do that. But to go to bed and turn from side to side on it, that is the proper thing, for it will not let you sleep, and if you do doze, you have no rest or repose, so that you have plenty of

time for prayer. I love my haircloth, for it is the angel that awakes me." Her disciplines were continuous, and she sometimes drew blood from her shoulders. She would like to go barefooted even during winter, but her confessor would not allow her, for he prudently considered the health of his penitent. However, she for many years went without shoes to Valverde by rough roads, sometimes moistening the ground with the blood of her feet. But above all, she treated her flesh with greatest cruelty, if we may call it so, when she reflected on the sufferings of Our Redeemer in the holy exercise of the *Via Crucis*.

In Honrubia there is a hill, at the foot of which the village lies, the ascent to which is rough and stony. From the bottom to the top the stations of the *Via Crucis* are marked out. The whole hill is wild and uncultivated, and useless except for this devout exercise, which the faithful perform during Lent and on the Fridays throughout the year, sometimes going barefooted or loaded with heavy crosses in memory of what our Saviour suffered to open to us the gates of heaven. This tender and useful devotion was most pleasing to the servant of God, who, not content with ordinary mortifications, often made it by night to avoid observation. She would privately leave her house and go round the Calvary with bare feet and knees, till both were made a living wound. She would stop a long time at each station, contemplating with tears and distress the sufferings of Jesus, and on reaching the top she would give vent to her pent-up feelings in sobs without the fear of being overheard. It is difficult to say what consolations the Lord communicated to her; but they must have been considerable, for Jesus is accustomed to repay with interest whatever is suffered for His sake.

To these mortifications she added others of not less severity. After her husband's death and the departure

of her son to join the Franciscans, having no one now to remark her, she used to sleep on rough reeds shaken on the floor, a piece of wood for her pillow, and an old coat for covering. And even this appearing to her too soft a bed, she laid sticks across it, converting it thus into a regular rack. On Fridays, to make herself feel more acutely the pains of Jesus, she would place on her brow a crown of sharp thorns, and with her arms stretched out in the form of a cross would repeat the Creed fifteen times, remaining in this trying position half an hour. Her fasting was continual, without eating flesh or fish in Advent or Lent, and several other days during the year, and often tasting nothing but bread and water. Nobody or nothing could make her interfere with this rigorous fast on the days her confessor allowed her, so that once when her son, Father Francis, came to see her on the feast of the Epiphany, and entreated her to eat a little to please him, she did not yield. She usually lived on boiled herbs, over which she poured a little oil, but without salt, and they were so tasteless that they passed into a proverb in the village. Nor was she content with this, but looking on the time spent in cooking her dinner every day as lost, she would prepare as much at once as would do her three or four days, and eat it cold in order not to lose time in lighting a fire.

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### III.

One of her principal mortifications, worthy of admiration but not imitation, was to abstain from drinking

even when suffering from acute thirst. She punished herself in this way so far that often, and particularly on Fridays, she would not taste one drop of water ; and not on one day or another, but for lengthened periods, did she endure this terrible martyrdom. During the whole of one Lent she drank not a drop of liquid, either natural or artificial. She suffered terribly during it, her thirst some days being so great that her tongue stuck to her palate, and she could not articulate a word. She bore it all with great courage and spiritual joy, in imitation of Jesus crucified, who, on the holy wood, deigned to suffer burning thirst for us. When, through charity or other holy motive, she had to suspend her austerities, she soon made up for it by increased rigour. On returning from Mahora, where her son was guardian of the Franciscans, and where she had to interrupt her penances through regard for the people in whose house she was staying, and who were benefactors of the convent, she immediately deprived herself of the coarsest food, till she actually suffered the extremity of hunger and thirst. Then, full of holy consolation, and glad of her victory, she said, as if speaking to her body : " Ah ! miserable body, you must thus pay for your dissipation in Mahora." And yet her excessive temperance gave edification to everyone.

But little would these exterior mortifications have served her if they had not been animated by the interior, and employed to increase her humility and recollection. For this purpose, however, she derived more strength from other sources, to which we can all have recourse, and from which we can draw treasures of merit. Such are prayer and the frequenting of the sacraments. Soon after beginning a life of such rigour she had the happiness to place herself under the direction of John of Alarcon, lord of Bonashe, who had retired from the world, became a priest, and was leading a hermitical

life in the Sanctuary of Our Lady of the Star, two leagues from Honrubia. She went with a companion to see him, at least, on all festival days, always barefooted, and there went to confession and communion, to the great consolation of her soul. Among other things which he recommended with great efficacy was the frequenting of the sacraments as the crystalline source of grace, and seeing the singular purity of her soul he allowed her to receive communion every day. This she had long desired, but unfortunately she had to consult the opinion of the priest of Honrubia, and found her aspirations frustrated. This priest, like many in our rural parishes in our own days, was opposed to daily communion, though one would think they should be only glad to distribute the bread of the strong to all duly disposed to receive it. But, anxious to improve her spirit, Anna availed herself of every opportunity she could to eat the Divine Manna: and so when any friar visited the place she received it daily from his hands with ineffable consolation. Nor did she experience less when the Lord afforded her the opportunity of receiving daily, with others, from the hands of a priest, who was a native of the village, and while on a visit used to rise early, to say Mass before the parish priest should make his appearance. But on his death she was again obliged to endure a hunger for the Eucharistic Bread, and had to console herself with a spiritual communion.

The day she received her adored Jesus she consecrated entirely to His glory, and spent the entire morning in giving thanks for so great a favour. When two feasts occurred together, she would not return home, but remained in the church, never leaving it, except to eat a mouthful of bread, which she took with her. At nightfall she would hide in a corner till the clerk closed the doors; and thus she spent night and day in prayer, one



half the time giving thanks for her past communion, and the other in preparing herself for the next. One of the nights she always remained in the church was the eve of Christmas, when, after attending Vespers and Matins, she heard the midnight Mass, at which she received communion, and afterwards attended all the others that were said that morning.

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#### IV.

I should like to mention here the manner in which she prepared herself for that great festival. The whole Advent she looked on herself as the slave of the Virgin and St. Joseph, and as such attended and accompanied them on their journey to Bethlehem. She followed them in her heart the whole day long, and when, at the evening Angelus, the clerk closed the doors of the church, she imagined they had arrived at Bethlehem, she holding the bridle of the Virgin's donkey. Then she went round the several altars, imagining that each was an inn. When she came to the first she would go on her knees, and knocking, as it were, at the door, would say, with great humility: "Is there lodging here for a poor man and his wife and their little slave." Then she imagined they answered: "There is no lodging," and would shed copious tears, and turning in grief to the Virgin, would say: "My queen and mistress, let us go forward; there is no lodging here." Then she went to another altar, and conceiving it also to be an inn, would knock as before, and would beg and beseech them, with tears, to give them shelter, and

imagining that the inn-keeper would answer her harshly, she would try to appease him and induce him to open his door to the poor pilgrims, and on receiving a new repulse would burst into a sea of tears, with sobs and groans, and would say to the Sovereign Queen : " Neither is there lodging here for you, my Lady ! " In this way she went round all the altars, from nightfall till shortly before Matins, which preceded the midnight Mass. Then, turning to the Virgin, with great tenderness, and with her eyes bathed in sweet tears, she would say to her : " Queen and Empress of heaven, you see now there is neither house nor inn with a corner for you and the Divine Child you are carrying in your womb ; but here, near the wall of the town, there is a little stable : it is retired and quiet, and that is the best can be said of it ; it is unoccupied. There, my Lady, you can get lodging, and it is the decentest place I can find. " Then she went to the altar of the Rosary, of which she had the care, and in which she had made a simple but very nice crib. Here she would place herself as in the stable, and would think she really saw the Blessed Virgin, the sweet Infant Jesus, the glorious St. Joseph, the angels, the shepherds, and the other persons concerned ; so that, intoxicated and beyond herself through the excessive love which inflamed her heart, the night appeared to her only a brief moment. She practised this pious exercise for many years, to the not small advantage of her soul. From this we may infer how devout she would be to the Blessed Sacrament, in whose presence she joyfully passed days and nights without tasting food, as also to the other mysteries of Jesus and Mary, which she celebrated with great fervour, and for which she prepared herself by severe penances and rigorous fasts. But what we can imitate her most in is her burning charity for the poor of Jesus Christ.

She was never very rich, contenting herself with a decent means of living, and, through love of evangelical poverty, she even renounced the part of inheritance that fell to her on the death of her mother, only reserving a little room for herself. It was so small that a man could not stand upright in it, and yet it served her as bedroom, pantry, and oratory, which she adorned with religious prints and a small crucifix. Whenever, in the space of thirty years, which she passed here, she was asked how she could live in such a nook, she would pleasantly answer that Jesus Christ had a harder bed than hers. But her edifying poverty was a source of riches to the poor. She went out to work for wages, not for her own support, but to have something to give to the poor, who flocked to her door to look for help. Besides the fruit of her labour, she could count on the assistance given her by a married son of hers, and her brothers, who thought she would employ it in procuring clothes; but she distributed with a liberal hand all she got, without sometimes reserving what was absolutely necessary. Her strong love for the needy compelled her to go out to glean in harvest time, that she might have so much the more to give them, and in doing so she had to suffer the scorching rays of a burning sun. How pleasing such steps must have been in the sight of God! How precious those drops of sweat in the eyes of Jesus! Surely the angels would count them, and enter them with the grains she gleaned in the Book of Life. Charity never cries enough; but rather by exercise its flame grows more ardent. It sometimes happened that, having only one loaf in the house, she would give the half of it to the first who asked it, trusting that God would not neglect her in her straits: at other times she would exchange fresh white bread for black crumbs. She was once asked why she did so, and she answered: "Never mind; you do not understand it. These crumbs

are sweeter than the other bread. Don't you see it is an alms given for the love of God."

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## V.

If her charity to those in health was ingenious, to the sick poor it was extraordinary. She reserved for those whom she visited all the presents she received from her female friends. Solicitous as a tender mother for their good, she not only consoled them with great sweetness, encouraging them to bear their sickness with resignation and joy, but she served them day and night, making their beds, washing them, feeding them, and performing for them all kinds of duties, no matter how low and disagreeable. She grieved to see them suffering from thirst, knowing what it was from experience; and so she would try to assuage it, holding that it is ever, particularly in the case of the sick, an act of mercy to give drink to the thirsty. She attended all without distinction of class, condition, or illness. She never stopped to think whether the sickness was contagious, or she exposed herself to idle talk. She had a special grace for suggesting affections of piety and contrition to the dying, and she made use of it in animating and consoling them to their last breath. After death she laid them out with great reverence and cleanliness, as temples which they had been of the image of God, and did not abandon them till she saw them get Christian burial. Few there were who died in the village without being attended by her. But she had special pleasure

in laying out children of tender age, on account of their candour and innocence.

When the little angels expired, Anna, considering that their souls were already in glory, kissed them with supreme respect and veneration, and, unable to contain the joy she felt at their happiness, she heaped congratulations on their parents, and said everything she could think of to mitigate their natural grief and make them resigned to the Divine will. For the same reason, that is, on account of their angelical purity, she entertained a special affection for all children, loaded them with caresses and endearments, and gave them alms if poor, though for the purpose she had to deprive herself of food. If they belonged to the better-off classes she would give them sweets or other little things to make them happy and attached to holy things. But her charity was most conspicuous in the case of her dear mother. Being now a widow, advanced in years, she became paralysed, and was unable to do anything for herself, so that she neither ate, nor moved, nor turned in the bed without her daughter's assistance, who attended her with such care and pleasure that the poor old woman in a certain measure forgot her ailments.

She did not excuse herself with the fact that her mother had other children more obliged to look after her than she was, but rather wished to take on herself the whole duty, nursing her with unrivalled care, not one or two years, but six. During this time she could, with her confessor's consent, have entered a convent of barefooted nuns, of the Order of our Lady of Mercy, founded by him in Madrid; but though it was such a good thing, and so anxiously desired by her, and accommodated to her spirit, yet she resisted her spiritual father's entreaties, in order not to abandon her mother to the care of other sons and daughters who might undertake it. The Lord

rewarded this respect by showering on her special favours, and, above all, a death full of deserts.

When entering her poor hut one day she fell and broke her leg. There is no need to tell of the acute pain usually felt in accidents of this sort; but the patience with which she bore it for three months is, indeed, worthy of mention. As if her sufferings were favours from heaven, she was ever content and happy, blessing the Lord, who purified her soul with the chalice of tribulation. Two things she keenly felt, and in both the good Jesus afforded her consolation. One was the necessity of leaving her hut, and Divine Providence provided her, through the instrumentality of her son, with another, resembling very much the one in which she had lived so many years. The other was her inability to go to the church to receive the Bread of Angels, as she had been accustomed, and even in this the Lord provided for her loving hunger. A zealous chaplain, following a well-established practice, used to say Mass very early, and console her with the Bread of Life, which rendered all her sufferings sweet.

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## VI.

When her son, Father Francis, was going as Superior to Loja, he was anxious to see his mother, and, thinking she was near her last, he expressed his desire to remain with her, to assist her in her agony and receive her maternal benediction. "Dear son," she said, "the

will of God be done. I neither wish nor desire anything else." She said no more at that time, but at day-break the following morning she called him and added: "Dear son, you may go to your charge as soon as you like, for I shall not die of this illness; but know that I shall soon leave this exile, and we shall see each other no more in this life. In heaven we shall meet, please God. As regards the benediction you desire, I shall send it to you by letter in due time." And everything turned out exactly as she said. She recovered from that illness, and soon after met with the fall we have already mentioned, and during the time she lay under it she sent the letter of benediction to her son. The Lord manifested to her the hour of her death. One Sunday, six days before she died, she sent her married son for the priest, to come and anoint her again, though only suffering from her ordinary attacks. The son excused himself from going, on the plea that she was no worse, and that the priest was much engaged, as it was a feast day; but in the end he yielded to her repeated entreaties, and that same evening she received the Holy Viaticum with great devotion. The people who came to see her promised her many months of life, but she assured them that she should die on the following Friday. "You shall see," she said, "how quickly I shall die. I have prayed to die on Friday, because on that day my Jesus died, and I expect it also, because I wear the scapular of Mount Carmel, and our Lady will fulfil the promise she gave when I put it on, that on the first Saturday after death she would free from the pains of purgatory those who wore her livery during life." She said this with much sweetness, and jokingly added: "I am also a daughter of St. Francis, and they say that on the feast of his wounds he descends to purgatory to give freedom to his children; but that would be a long time to wait. The Blessed Virgin is more active, and hence I wish to

die on Friday." She received Extreme Unction on Wednesday, and on Friday, at twelve o'clock, she calmly slept the sleep of the just, the 3rd of October, 1642. There were no tears for her death, for the whole people who came to venerate her mortal remains considered her death as the beginning of eternal life. Every little thing belonging to her was seized on as a relic, and at her funeral there was not an association or confraternity or a person in the place who did not attend. They buried her, in the habit of St. Francis, in the village church, and her memory lives as an example to the courageous and a stimulus to the weak.

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## Reading from the History of the Holy Family.

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### FROM THE RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS TO THE LAST SUPPER.

DURING our Saviour's stay in Bethania, Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, fell sick. The two sisters, who had such confidence in the protection of Jesus Christ, sent a messenger to him, saying: "Lord, behold he whom Thou lovest is sick." We will now let St. John tell the story in his own words: "And Jesus hearing it, said to them: This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God: that the Son of God may be glorified by it. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister Mary, and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he still remained in the same place two days: then after that he said to his disciples: Let us go into Judea again. The disciples say to Him: Rabbi, the Jews but now sought to stone thee: and goest thou thither again? Jesus answered: Are there not twelve hours of the day? If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world: but if he walk in the night he stumbleth, because the light is not in him. These things he said:

and after that he said to them: Lazarus our friend sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep. His disciples therefore said: Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. But Jesus spoke of his death; and they thought that he spoke of the repose of sleep. Then therefore Jesus said to them plainly: Lazarus is dead; and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe: but let us go to him. Thomas therefore, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples: Let us also go, that we may die with him. Jesus therefore came and found that he had been four days already in the grave. (Now Bethania was near Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off.) And many of the Jews were come to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Martha, therefore, as soon as she heard that Jesus was come, went to meet him; but Mary sat at home. Martha therefore said to Jesus: Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But now also I know that whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. Jesus saith to her: Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith to him: I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus saith to her: I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, although he be dead, shall live: and everyone that liveth, and believeth in me, shall not die for ever. Believeth thou this? She saith to Him: Yea, Lord, I have believed that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God, who art come into this world. And when she had said these things, she went and called her sister Mary secretly, saying: The master is come and calleth for thee. She, as soon as she heard this, riseth quickly and cometh to him. For Jesus was not yet come into the town: but he was still in that place where Martha had met him. The Jews therefore who were with her in the house and comforted her, when they

saw Mary that she rose up speedily and went out, followed her, saying: She goeth to the grave to weep there. When Mary therefore was come where Jesus was, seeing him she fell down at his feet, and saith to him: Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died. Jesus therefore when he saw her weeping and the Jews that were come with her, weeping, groaned in the spirit, and troubled himself, and said: Where have you laid him? They say to him: Lord, come and see. And Jesus wept. The Jews therefore said: Behold how he loved him. But some of them said: Could not he that opened the eyes of the man born blind, have caused that this man should not die? Jesus therefore again groaning in himself, cometh to the sepulchre: now it was a cave, and a stone was laid over it. Jesus saith: Take away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith to him: Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he is now of four days. Jesus saith to her: Did not I say to thee that if thou believe, thou shalt see the glory of God? They took, therefore, the stone away. And Jesus, lifting up his eyes, said: Father, I give thee thanks that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always; but because of the people who stand about have I said it; that they may believe that thou hast sent me. When he had said these things, he cried with a loud voice: Lazarus, come forth: and presently he that had been dead came forth, bound feet and hands with winding-bands, and his face was bound with a napkin. Jesus said to them: Loose him and let him go. Many therefore of the Jews who were come to Mary and Martha, and had seen the things that Jesus did, believed in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things that Jesus had done." And this, of course, they did to urge them on in the resolution they had formed of destroying Him.

And in reality, the Scribes and Pharisees, jealous at seeing the people following Jesus, called a council to take strong measures, and resolved that He should die, because, as Caiphas had said, it was right that one should die to save the whole people from ruin. He thus prophesied, as the Gospel says, without knowing it; for according to the designs of heaven Jesus should die for the salvation of the world. Nevertheless, our Saviour quietly retired to Ephrem, on the Jordan, where He remained till the twenty-fourth of March, which fell on the fourth of the month Nisan.

In spite of the search the Jews were making to discover the whereabouts of our Redeemer, and to seize Him, He again took the road to Jerusalem for the purpose of celebrating the Pasch, and to suffer death in order to consummate our redemption. On the way He foretold to His disciples all that should happen Him in the holy city; but all He said was as a closed book to them, and an incomprehensible mystery. They were now approaching Jericho, when a poor blind beggar, sitting by the way-side, hearing of the arrival of our Saviour, began to cry out: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." And the more they told him to hold his peace, the more he cried out. Jesus stopped, and ordered him to be brought to Him, and when he arrived said to him: "What wilt thou that I should do to thee?" "Lord, that I may see." Our Saviour thereupon cured him, and pursued His journey; and the poor man, full of joy and gratitude, joined the crowd, and ceased not to glorify the Lord for the favour conferred on him.

There was in Jericho a very rich man named Zacheus, the head of the publicans, and a collector of the imperial taxes. Anxious to see Jesus, he went out to receive Him the moment he heard of his arrival. But being unable to see Him, as well on account of the crowd as of

his diminutive stature, he got up on a tree, to view Him to his satisfaction. When our Lord saw him He turned to him and said: Zacheus, make haste and come down for this day I must abide in thy house." He obeyed on the moment, and entertained Jesus with no less pleasure to himself than scandal to the hypocritical Pharisees. The visit and conversation of our Divine Master affected him so much, that, resolved to become virtuous, he said: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have wronged any man of anything I restore him fourfold." "This day," said the Lord, "is salvation come to this house, . . . for the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." When going the next day from Jericho, Jesus gave sight to two blind men, one of whom, called Bartimeus, or son of Timeus, was well known in the whole country around, and this caused the miracle wrought by Jesus Christ to be soon divulged in all directions.

Our Saviour arrived in Jerusalem some days before the Pasch, but He did not show Himself in the Temple on account of the enmity of the Jews. Six days before the feast He went to Bethania, where He had raised Lazarus to life and supped in the house of Simon the leper, Lazarus being one of the guests and Martha serving at table. Mary took an alabaster box of great value, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and dried them with her hair, and breaking the box poured the remainder on the head of the Saviour, filling the whole house with the sweetest fragrance. Then Judas Iscariot was scandalised, and said: "Why was this waste of the ointment made? For this ointment might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and given to the poor." But he said this not through mercy for the poor, but because he was a robber, and had charge of the alms offered to Jesus. And others of those present, taking ill this act of Mary, murmured within themselves the

same as the traitor. But Jesus coming to her defence, answering them, said : " Let her alone, why do you molest her ? She hath wrought a good work upon me. For the poor you have always with you ; and whensoever you will you can do them good ; but me you have not always. What she had she hath done : she is come beforehand to anoint my body for the burial. Amen, I say to you, wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which she hath done shall be told for a memorial of her."

On the morning of the following day, the thirtieth of March, and tenth of Nisan, Jesus left Bethania and went to Jerusalem. And when passing in front of Bethphage, near Mount Olivet, He said to two of His disciples : " Go into the village that is over against you, and immediately at your coming in thither, you shall find a colt tied, upon which no man yet hath sat : loose him, and bring him. And if any man shall say to you : What are you doing ? say ye that the Lord hath need of him : and immediately he will let him come hither." They did as they were told, and everything happened as our Saviour had ordained. Then they put His garments on the ass, and Jesus mounted it. When coming down from Mount Olivet, His disciples and a great multitude of Jews, who had come out to meet Him, were filled with joy, and began to cheer Jesus and exclaim : " Hosannah, blessed is He who cometh in the name of the Lord. Blessed be the kingdom of our father, David, that cometh. Hosannah in the highest." In the midst of this ovation Jesus entered into the city, and passing through the enthusiastic crowds, made His way to the Temple. Some Pharisees took offence at this triumphant reception, and even asked our Lord to impose silence on those who accompanied Him. Jesus answered that if they should hold their peace the very stones would cry out. And He wept over Jerusalem, and said she knew

not now the things that were for her peace, but the day would come when she should know, when she should find herself surrounded and pressed on all sides by her enemies. A prophecy which was later on fulfilled to the very letter.

Entering the Temple amid enthusiastic acclamations and hosannahs, He overthrew the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those who sold doves, saying, as on a former occasion: "My house shall be called a house of prayer. But you have made it a den of thieves." In the evening He retired to Bethania, and on the following day, Tuesday morning, returned to Jerusalem, and He was hungry. "And when He had seen afar off a fig tree having leaves, he came if perhaps he might find anything on it. And when He was come to it he found nothing but leaves. For it was not the time for figs." And He cursed it, to show us that at all times we should be prepared to present ourselves before the divine tribunal laden with the fruits of good works. Full of lively and burning zeal for the glory of His house, He again on this morning cast out the buyers and sellers from the Temple, and would not so much as allow any man to carry a vessel through it. The chief priests were offended at this holy liberty, and sought an occasion to take Him, but were afraid of the people, who were delighted with the salutary teachings of their Divine Master. On Wednesday, the first of April, when returning to Jerusalem with his disciples, He found the cursed fig-tree withered, and took occasion from it to exalt the virtue of faith, which is capable of transporting mountains. He was again, as usual, teaching in the Temple, when the chief priests and senators or ancients of the city came to Him, and asked Him by what authority He did those things. Jesus, in his turn, put them a question, which completely disconcerted them "*The baptism of John,*" He said, "was it from heaven or

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from men?" They did not dare to give any answer; for if they said it was from heaven Jesus might have replied, "Why then did you not believe him?" And if they said it was from earth, all the people would have risen up to stone them, for they venerated John as a great prophet. So they evasively confessed their ignorance. Then our Saviour said to them: "Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things." Turning immediately to the priests and doctors, He proposed some parables to them which went to show that God rejected them for their unbelief, and would call in their place the Gentiles to form His Church.

Here is one of the principal:—"A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it out to husbandmen: and he was abroad for a long time. And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard. Who beating him, sent him away empty. And again he sent another servant. But they beat him also, and treating him reproachfully, sent him away empty. And again he sent the third, and they wounded him also, and cast him out. Then the Lord of the vineyard said: What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be, when they see him, they will reverence him. Whom when the husbandmen saw, they thought within themselves, saying: This is the heir, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. So casting him out of the vineyard, they killed him. What, therefore, will the Lord of the vineyard do to them? He will come, and will destroy these husbandmen, and will give the vineyard to others." The Pharisees seeing that they were alluded to, answered: "God forbid." Afterwards the Herodians, the Sadducees, and the Pharisees went one after another to Him to put Him captious questions, with the object of finding some pretext to put Him in prison. "Master," they said, "we know that thou speakest and teachest rightly; and thou



dost not respect any person, but teachest the way of God in truth. Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Cæsar or no? But he considering their guile, said to them: "Why tempt you me? Show me a penny. Whose image and inscription hath it? They answering said to him, Cæsar's. And he said to them: Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsars; and to God the things that are God's." And they all left without knowing what reply to give to this answer. The Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, asked Him to which of them a woman should belong after the resurrection, who had married several husbands in succession. And Jesus answered that after the resurrection there would be neither marrying nor giving in marriage, nor would there be any fear of death, for men should be like unto the angels. Irritated at these replies, they did not attempt to put any new questions to Him. A Pharisee, however, did ask Him: "Master, which is the great commandment of the law?" Jesus said: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like to this: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Jesus then asked: "What think you of Christ: whose son is he?" They say to Him:—"David's." Our Lord answered:—"How, then, doth David in spirit call him Lord?" No one could answer Him, nor did they dare to question Him any more.

When He had confounded the pride of those perverse priests, He warned the people against their example, and said: "Whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do; but according to their works do you not." For everyone must give an account of his own actions, not of those of others. Our Lord called them "hypocrites, whitened sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones, and

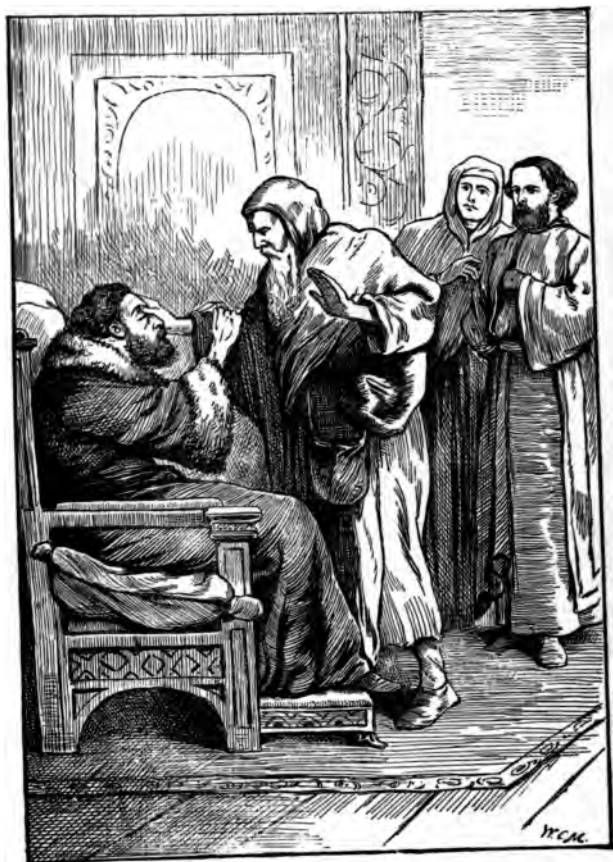
of all filthiness." He called them also "serpents, a generation of vipers," who will in vain try to escape from eternal justice.

On coming out from the temple His disciples called His attention to the beauties of that famous edifice, and spoke of the large alms which some people offered to meet the expenses of it. In this connexion He remarked that the alms of a poor widow, who had thrown two mites into the box, was much more agreeable to God than the large sums given by others: because they gave of what they had to spare, but the widow gave all she possessed. As regards the splendid temple, He foretold that a time would come when it would be no more than a heap of ruins. When they reached Mount Olivet, a place from which the temple could be seen, the disciples asked Him when this ruin of which He had spoken should occur. Jesus answered by pointing out the fearful circumstances of the siege which the Romans should lay to Jerusalem thirty-two years afterwards. With this prediction He mixed up some details, which some writers refer to the last judgment, when we shall all have to appear to render an account to the Sovereign Judge. With the object of warning us to be always prepared for death, the end of our struggles and our merits, He proposed as usual several parables. Such was that of the servant who was amusing himself instead of attending to his duties, believing his master would not come so soon, and was surprised in his idleness; such also was that of the other servant, who knew not how to put out his talent to interest. One, however, deserves particular attention, and it is that of the foolish virgins. "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be like to ten virgins, who taking their lamps went out to meet the bridegroom and the bride. And five of them were foolish, and five wise. But the five foolish, having taken their lamps, did not take oil with them. But the wise

took oil in their vessels with the lamps. And the bridegroom tarrying, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made: Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him. Then all the virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise: Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out. The wise answered, saying: Lest perhaps there be not enough for us and you, go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. Now whilst they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut. But at last came also the other virgins, saying: Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answering said: Amen, I say to you, I know you not." Our Lord finished with this important maxim: "Watch ye, therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour." For the same purpose He had told us on another occasion that death was like a thief, who chooses the hour we are least prepared, to attack our dwelling. And what would become of us if he should surprise us without the oil of divine grace, and buried in the darkness of sin?

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ST. GUALFARD.

# LIGHT FROM THE LOWLY.

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## Series XI.

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### ST. GUALFARD, HARNESSMAKER.

#### I.

IN former times the harnessmakers of Verona were accustomed to celebrate with great pomp the feast of their patron, St. Gualfard, who belonged to their trade, and in it saved his soul by his heroic virtues. He was born in Aosta, a town of Piedmont, which he left with some merchant companions of his, and went to Verona, the scene of his brilliant life. Enchanted by the fertility and beauty of that prolific soil, he there took up his residence, accompanied by one of his friends, named Lico. In his attention to his business he gave great edification to all who had dealings with him. He was affable, indulgent, sober, chaste, generous, and industrious. A lover of retirement and a hater of disputes and dangerous pastimes, he spent his leisure time, now in the house of God treating of the important business

of his salvation, now in performing works of mercy, and again, in pleasant and instructive conversation with people of the same disposition. And this did not make him weak and pusillanimous, as some might be inclined to think, for he was strong-minded and of great power of will and endurance whenever any good work was to be done. Nor can he be suspected of doing it for the purpose of acquiring wealth; for, content with what was purely necessary for the support of life, he gave all he earned to the poor, trusting that God would not abandon him. His heart, strong and patient when dangers had to be met or adversity endured, could never regard the poverty and misery of his brethren without commiseration. The desire to be able to assist them in their afflictions and straits urged him to rise early, that he might have more time for work without interfering with his pious exercises.

These solid virtues are not acquired without great piety and a constant affection for prayer. Both of these were possessed in an eminent degree by our harness-maker, who spent in the temple and in retirement the precious hours which others squander in miserable trifles and games prejudicial to their eternal salvation. How could he spend them better than in unbosoming himself to Jesus, that most faithful and constant friend, intercourse with whom never becomes wearisome, but grows sweeter and sweeter day by day? We are told in Holy Writ that happy is he who finds a true friend; and if so, what shall be the happiness of him who can claim the friendship of the Son of God? Has he doubts? His Friend's knowledge is without limits. Does he groan in destitution? His treasures are inexhaustible. Is he persecuted? His power is irresistible. What friend like Him, who, in spite of our ingratitude and errors, receives us back a thousand-and-one times to His grace the moment we repent? Who, like Him, is so dis-

interested and generous that He rejoices in our friendship only that He may shower His benefits on us? Who so loving as to declare that He finds His delight in us, and in becoming our food and taking up His dwelling in our hearts that He may not be separated from us for one moment? And as true friendship supposes equality, in order to have us as friends He raised us at the cost of His blood to the dignity of the sons of God. How can this sovereign condescension be repaid except by flying from sin, the only thing which can break the bonds of a friendship so honourable? To tighten this friendship the more, Gualfard frequently treated with Jesus in prayer, and regularly received Him in the Holy Eucharist, from which he derived courage to despise the mockery of his companions and trample on the maxims of the world. Thus, in the midst of his toil, and in the exercise of his trade, in which he was very clever, our harnessmaker cultivated that which ennobles man—virtue—and made rapid progress in it. There was one thing which withdrew him more and more from the world. Considering one day the little confidence which can be placed in men, the instability of this miserable life, which a breath may extinguish, and the toils of the devil into which one may so easily fall, and avoid with such difficulty, and seeing his own weakness daily exposed to trial by the bad example of his companions, and the scandalous conduct of many with whom he had dealings, he thought of retiring to some solitude where he could freely reduce his noble thoughts to practice, uninterrupted by the traffic of the world.

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## II.

Not far from Verona, on the banks of the river Adige, there were dense solitary forests, where the woodman's hatchet was never heard, and which until then had been the dwelling-place of serpents and wild beasts. Thither went Gualfard, guided by his angel guardian ; and without communicating his determination to anyone, there fixed his residence, anxious to dedicate himself to prayer and penance. The trees supplied him not only with abundant food for his frugal meals, but with boughs and branches to repair his little hut. He, however, cultivated, as much for recreation as through need, a little garden close to his dwelling. Twenty years after some boatmen were sailing on the river, enchanted by the picturesqueness and beauty of the woods, the songs of the birds, the purity of the air, and the delicious aroma shed by innumerable flowers, never dreaming that human being had his dwelling there. At last they discovered something like the form of a man, and landing, they went to explore the neighbourhood. They soon discovered a hut, surrounded by a well-cultivated garden. A cross formed of rude sticks, a few pious books, and some stone seats were the only furniture the hut contained. Then they went in search of the gardener, and found a man embrowned by the sun, and worn out by penance, with long and tangled beard and hair, and clothed in tatters. This was Gualfard. We know not how he spent his time, what lights he received from the Holy Ghost, what favours from heaven, or the conflicts he had to endure from man's mortal enemies. Undoubtedly he should have perished in that solitude unknown to the world if he had not been providentially discovered by *the travellers*. They asked him to go with them, and

when he stoutly refused they compelled him by force to accompany them to Verona, where his friends recognised him and provided him with clothes. For the purpose of preventing his return to the woods they procured for him a lodging in town, near St. Peter's Church, where he should be at perfect liberty to give loose rein to his fervour. The offer was not displeasing to the saint. He thanked them for their charitable hospitality, and received whatever alms were offered to him, of which he reserved a small part for his own few wants, and distributed the remainder to the poor.


Thus did he live for some time in great happiness. Dedicated to prayer, and perhaps to the toil of his trade, he derived motives to bless and love God from everything. The warbling of the birds, the aroma of the plants, the beauty of the flowers, were to him a book in which to learn the wisdom, power, goodness, and perfections of the Almighty; and the Lord, ever liberal and generous to those who lend a prompt ear to His divine inspirations, encouraged the saint's good dispositions by singular graces. Sometimes when the servant of God was drawing water from the river, the fish would come to his hand, as if saying: "Here we are by the will of God: dispose of us as you wish;" but he, burning with divine love, would dismiss them, and tell them to sing the praises of the Lord. Then he would exclaim, full of joy: "Bless, ye fountains, the Lord! Bless, ye seas and rivers, my God! Ye fish, and all things that move in the waters, intone a hymn to the King of Glory!" In the year 1117 a great inundation occurred from the rising of the Adige, sweeping everything before it, and compelling the inhabitants to seek safety in some places of refuge. Our harnessmaker had also to leave and look for an asylum in the Abbey of the Holy Trinity, at a little distance from Verona.



## III.

After the danger had passed he returned to the cit, and gladly accepted the hospitality of the monks of Sa Salvador. He here made himself beloved by all the religious by his modesty, his humility, his obedience his contempt of human respect, and by his fervour in the divine service. Lodged in a little hut which the fathers had near the church, he frequently visited our Divine Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, and paid Him his fervent respects. From this familiar intercourse with his Divine Master, Gualfard drew immense treasures of a heavenly character by his fasting, mortification, works of mercy, and the constant exercise of all the virtues. His admirable example attracted to his poor dwelling a great crowd of the faithful, who came to his door to be edified by the living reflection of a heart disengaged from the world, and to seek relief in their infirmities. The blind, the lame, the paralytic, the deaf, the leprous were there, and all derived benefit from the prayers of the harnessmaker.

On a certain occasion a citizen of Verona, called Mugeto, with eye disease, and in evident danger of losing his sight, influenced by the fame of the miracles wrought by the saint, sent to ask him to visit him, as he himself could not leave home on account of his infirmity. As the saint was satisfied with the notice of God, and hated the applause of men, he refused to accede to Mugeto's desire; and it was necessary for the Prior of San Salvador to order him to do what he was requested. Then, he went by night, to avoid all notice and vainglory. When the sick man found Gualfard was near him he seized his hands, pressed them to his eyes, and was instantly cured. Thus did God glorify him who sought not his own glory, but only asked to be let alone to



sanctify his soul, the only end on earth for which he had been created.

When he knew his end was approaching he ordered a coffin and gave directions that when dead they should put him in it and bury him, not in the cemetery where Christians were interred, but in the public highway, that all might walk on him; for as he, in his own opinion, had led the life of a dog, it was only right he should be buried like a dog, and that all should trample on one who had so often trampled on the divine commandments. In a short time, as he had foreseen, he slept in the peace of the just; and they not only did not comply with his humble desires, but they built a marble tomb for him, and buried him with great reverence and devotion in the Church of San Salvador. He departed this life on 30th of April, 1127. Soon his tomb became famous for the miracles which the Lord wrought through his intercession. Later on, in 1602, a great portion of his relics were translated to Ausburg, and placed in the new church of the Capuchins. Thus does the Lord reward, even in this life, the memory of His servants who learned to sanctify themselves in humble stations. In God's eye virtue alone possesses true greatness.



## ST. GOODMAN, MERCHANT.

### I.


ABOUT the end of the twelfth century there lived in Cremona, a town of Lombardy, a merchant who in the midst of his bargains and dealings was able by his virtue

to enamour the Divine Heart. This was the Blessed Goodman Tucinga, son of a merchant, who by his traffic and industry had acquired a position, if not high and rich, at least decent. His parents gave him in baptism the name Goodman, that is a man of rectitude, a signification which our saint realised thoroughly by his edifying conduct and heroic disinterestedness. They knew that the principal part of parents' duties is to imbue the hearts of their children in the Christian maxims which may serve them as a guide and rule for the direction of their conduct in this valley of tears; and to this they at once dedicated themselves by sowing in that virgin soil the seed which later on should produce abundant fruit. Many complain of the annoyance they get in their old age from their unruly children, who hurry them in bitterness to the grave; but those unhappy parents usually gather what they sowed, and their children's bad conduct is no more than the scourge with which God afflicts them for the neglect of their offspring in their youth, and the bad example they gave them. At least it is often so. But Goodman's parents had never to complain of the slightest offence, for they ever found him docile, obedient, affectionate, and disposed to please them in all things.

Content with their condition and fortune, they never thought of giving him a higher position, as they well might, and when he arrived at a suitable age they put him to business in their own line. For the proper transaction of the duties of a merchant he took as a principle that truth and not deceit is the foundation of real credit; and hence he resolved and carried out his resolution never to avail himself of fraud or tricks, but to act in all cases legally and in good faith, as good Christians should. And this very mode of procedure, which according to the opinion of the world should have ruined him brought him customers who trusted in his honesty

and had no fear of being imposed on. Our young merchant was also persuaded that fraud never produces good results; and that even if those who practise it sometimes amass wealth, if God does not suddenly deprive them of it, they at least will not long enjoy it. He was punctual in his payments, he avoided even the appearance of injustice, and he would have preferred to lose his whole fortune sooner than commit a venial sin. This spirit, infused into him by his pious parents, placed him beyond those risks in which young men often lose their innocence. And let no one think that he was therefore a dry, uninteresting young fellow, for, on the contrary, by his gracious manner, gentleness, and courtesy he won the affections of all who frequented his shop; but his graciousness was always chaste as purity itself; his conversation edifying as piety; his lips never uttered those double-meaning words and poisonous stories heard so often from others. The saint saw in his work and dealings an occupation given him by Divine Providence, and endeavoured to discharge it as best he could, availing himself of it as a means of sanctifying himself and promoting the sanctification of others.

No business seems more exposed to dissipation than that of a merchant. Standing behind a counter, he is at all times obliged to hear a thousand different questions, and to have to treat with persons of different dispositions and humours, and to suffer the impertinence of the ill-reared and exacting, which is enough to try the patience of a saint. Goodman was one in reality, and he had the fortitude to bear this and much more, and knew how to observe recollection in the midst of all. His customers used to say he was a young man without passions, because he had them under control by constant mortification. The clamour of the markets and fairs did not interrupt his union with God, nor did the most unreasonable demands disturb his peace and calm: he



answered all, he contented all without losing sight of God. His leisure moments he employed either in arranging his stock or regulating his accounts, or in reading some pious book, or in saying his prayers, which he broke off whenever occasion required it. The Sundays and festival days he consecrated entirely to the service of the Lord. The divine offices, prayer, works of mercy, some innocent amusement, these were the occupations of the day of rest. With how much more consolation and peace did he retire to bed than those who pass it in idle amusements, or dance-houses, or gambling-places, or worse, without thinking they have a soul to save, or that there is a God who can punish them for all eternity! Goodman's house was the dwelling of peace; and the home of those unfortunates is the house of hell. In theirs everything is confusion and intemperance, accompanied by cursing and swearing, and if night comes to reduce all to silence, it is only to produce on the morrow grief and remorse. To the conqueror I will give hidden manna, God said, and the hidden manna is the joy of the just soul, the conqueror of the world, and the inheritor of heaven. The sinner, on the contrary, the slave of Satan and the playtoy of low passions, is sickened with gall of asps, which allows him not to enjoy his forbidden pleasures. It is a singular and true fact that Lazarus, the hungry, disgusting, and despised beggar, was happier and more master of the world than Herod, or even Augustus; for, as the child of God, he despised and trampled on the things of earth and desired only to be heir to things eternal, whilst they, without hope of eternal happiness, could not be satisfied with what they had.

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## II.

Young Tucinga's parents, when they saw these maxims penetrating that virgin soil like a heavenly dew, were beyond themselves with joy, and ceased not to bless the God of mercies for it. At their beloved son's side they lived content and happy; but to assure his future and free him from danger, they sought for him in due time a prudent, industrious wife, capable of helping him in the care of his house; and the saint, more in deference to their wish than from choice, made up his mind to marry. In this holy state he endeavoured to follow perfectly the counsels of the Apostle, preserving stainless his conjugal chastity, pleasing his wife in every way he could, and relieving his old parents of their anxiety and toil. When he took charge of the house, he allowed no occasion to pass of encouraging those of his household to the practice of Christian virtues, in which he always led the van. What was most conspicuous in him was his charity to the poor, which knew no limits. It grew stronger, however, after the death of his parents, from whom he inherited a considerable fortune. When he found himself, on one hand, absolute master of the property, and considered, on the other, how fleeting are the riches of earth, which are obtained with great labour, preserved with fear, and lost with sorrow, he was content with having what was necessary to pass life decently, and resolved to give himself up more and more to God, and seek by good works that treasure which ever endures, and of which no one can deprive us. He consequently began not only to succour with liberal hand those who had recourse to him, but to personally seek out the indigent in their huts, and bear to them the benediction of heaven. Nor was his charity satisfied with alleviating



corporeal ailments, but he endeavoured also to bring all to the path of eternal salvation. He consoled the afflicted, admonished the erring, taught the ignorant, reconciled enemies, counselled the wandering, visited the sick ; in a word, with his generosity and smiling face, he was the alleviation, shield, and consolation of the indigent poor, who all looked on him as a loving father.

Goodman's wife, though a pious enough woman in her way, looked on the affairs of the house with earthly eyes, and began to fear that her husband would impoverish them by his excessive charities. Influenced by these thoughts, she quietly complained to him, and gently asked him not to be so lavish to the poor if he did not wish to be soon reduced to want, and lose all he and his parents took so long to acquire. But he told her not to fear, for they could put their money into no better business, for Jesus, a capitalist who never failed, and should never fail, had promised a hundred for one, and always kept his promise faithfully. And that besides the interest, by such actions they should gain the eternal kingdom of glory. The afflicted woman was not satisfied with such talk, and finding that kind words and loving entreaties were of no use, she broke into bitter invectives unworthy of a quiet Christian woman ; but all her fury was lost on Goodman, who, following the maxims of the Gospel, continued to be the father of the poor, and with soft answers tried to disarm his wife's anger.

But when the noble considerations which he put before her made no impression, God addressed her in miracles and opened her eyes. The country was afflicted with a famine, and the good merchant stripped himself of all to aid the needy. It happened one day that when returning from the church he was surrounded by a great multitude of poor, who asked him, with tears, for a bit of bread. This was more than enough to move that

charitable heart: he took them all home and divided among them every morsel of bread which his wife had reserved for the week's provision. When the good woman came home she was at once told by the servant what had occurred; she ran to the pantry to see with her own eyes, and found it full of bread, but whiter and sweeter than that which her husband had given to the poor. This prodigy silenced her, but her husband told her to mention it to no one, and to have more confidence in God for the future.

On another occasion, when going to a property of his on which he had some men at work, he met some poor people who asked him for a drink. He at once gave them the wine he was taking to the men, and soon the vessel was empty. As it was late, and to avoid his wife's complaints, he did not like to return home to fill it again, but trusting in the forbearance of his men, or in God's goodness, he filled it with water and made the sign of the cross over it. Benediction of God! The workmen drank, and declared it excellent wine. In wonder they asked Goodman where he got wine so exquisite; and he, thinking they were mocking him, took a drink and could not but thank God for such a favour. This miracle would have remained unknown if the very parties who were at the filling of the vessel with water had not come forward and attested it on oath before the Pope, as is recorded in the Bull of his canonisation.



### III.

To his alms and other works of mercy he constantly added fasting and mortification of the senses and the subjection of his passions. He never allowed himself the

slightest satisfaction or recreation which he thought disagreeable to God. His breast was ever burning in the flame of divine love, which he tried to foster in the midst of his occupations. Ejaculations were quite familiar to him, so that all times, places, and duties were to him suitable for prayer. He had, however, his fixed hours in which he specially dedicated himself to the contemplation of the divine mysteries. At that time it was the custom to chant matins at midnight, and many devout people attended them. Our merchant was never absent. So that Orberto, parish priest of St. Gil, as soon as he heard the bell, hastened to open the church, as he knew for a certainty that Goodman would be waiting. Not seldom did it happen that he found the saint praying inside without anyone's opening the door for him. Thus did the Lord publish the sanctity of His servant. After matins, the saint spent the time in prayer, till the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass began. He was usually seen prostrate before a crucifix; and fixed there, with his countenance inflamed and his eyes bailed in tears, he spent whole hours studying that model of the Predestined. Burning with the love of God, he then heard Mass with such exemplary fervour that he inspired all who saw him with devotion. The saint felt assured that that august ceremony in memory of the tragedy verified on Calvary was, without controversy, the most venerable of Catholicism; and consequently, any degree of composure, silence, recollection, and attention appeared to him little in comparison to what such august mysteries deserved. His love of Jesus was never satisfied. Besides hearing Mass daily and spending the time we have mentioned before the crucifix, he had an hour laid off for paying a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. Nothing could keep him from offering to the Lord every evening this little homage, so useful to souls seeking after perfection. Wet or dry, in

heat or cold, he never omitted his visit, which our Lord used to repay with celestial favours. His tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin was also very lively. It was enough for him to see an image of her, or hear her sweet name, to feel his heart burning with love for her. One could see how attached he was to this sovereign Queen when he happened to speak of her glories. His words were flaming darts, which inspired all with love for Mary. And what all would he not say of this sea of sweetness and charity, whose celestial witchery ever threw its spell over the saints? How they did melt in her praise, and in the recollection of her power and unlimited grandeur! St. Ephraim calls her "Queen of all men, and most beautiful, . . . more pure than the splendours and rays of the sun, more precious than the cherubim, more holy than the seraphim, and more glorious than all the armies of heaven." St. Peter Chrysologus, enchanted on contemplating her perfections, exclaims: "Undoubtedly blessed was she who was greater than the heavens, stronger than the earth, more capacious than the universe, for she received into her that God whom the whole world cannot contain." It would keep us too long to weave a garland for Mary of the flowers offered to her by the saints: it is enough to read St. Bernard, [who is enthusiastic when repeating to her those tenderest expressions characteristic of his heart of fire. He calls her the inventor of grace, the mediator of our salvation, the restorer of ages: "All generations shall call thee blessed, for thou art the Mother of God, the Mistress of the world, the Queen of heaven, who didst bring life and glory to all nations; in thee the angels found their joy, the just grace, sinners pardon. Justly have all creatures fixed their gaze on thee, for in thee, with and by thee, and of thee, the divine hand of the Omnipotent repaired and recreated all things which He had created." What honey must also have flowed

from the enamoured bosom of Goodman when exalting Mary with tender expressions, all the more pleasing because they spontaneously flowed from his simple lips!

After this no one can wonder that his example and pious conversation should bring back to God sinners and contumacious heretics, whom many apostolic men and fervent religious were unable to reduce. The Omnipotent blessed the zeal of our merchant, who lived only for the glory of God and the good of his fellow-men. As was his life, so was his death.

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#### IV.

On the 13th of November, 1197, he attended matins as usual, and remained kneeling before the crucifix and an image of the Blessed Virgin till the beginning of Mass. At the *Gloria in excelsis* he extended his arms in the form of a cross, as he did on other occasions; and about the middle of it he fell to the ground, as if he were prostrating himself. Nobody thought anything of this, for he was accustomed to so incline himself in similar circumstances. But finding that he did not rise at the Gospel, they thought that perhaps he had fallen asleep, and they went to awaken him, but found that he had slept the sleep of the just. He had died of love of God. On the moment the rumour spread through the town that the father of the poor was dead; and his fellow-citizens, but particularly the poor, full of a mixture of sadness and consolation: sadness because they had lost so compassionate a protector, and consolation because they felt sure of his salvation, and of his intercession for them, ran to witness the victory of the saint, and to venerate his mortal remains. Soon the miracles with which the Lord published Goodman's glory attracted the attention

of all Italy, and excited in a lively manner the devotion of the faithful to the blessed merchant. Sicard, Bishop of Cremona, after examining Goodman's heroic virtues, and the truth of the prodigies, of some of which he had himself been a witness, went, accompanied by some respectable persons, to Rome, to ask for his canonisation. Scarcely a year after his glorious victory, Innocent III., after mature examination, placed his name in the catalogue of saints. This was in December, 1198, a year, a month, and seventeen days after his death. Later on they exhumed his remains to place them in a marble tomb, after translating them with great pomp to the cathedral, where the tomb had been erected. But the head and some bones remained in St. Gil's Church, where they were preserved in a rich reliquary.



## SS. CLAUDIUS, NICOSTRATUS, SIMPHORIANUS, CASTORIUS, AND SIMPLICIUS, SCULPTORS.

### I.

TERRIBLE for the Church of Jesus Christ, but glorious, was the Era of the Martyrs, on account of the number of Christians who laid down their lives for the Faith. Diocletian, who in the beginning had shown a certain leaning to the faithful, and under whose protection the Church made rapid strides, changing later on, through the influence of the pagan priests, became so cruel to the Christians, that in sanguinary inhumanity he surpassed all former persecutors of Catholicity. It was during this bitter persecution that our glorious sculptor suffered in Rome. The first four—Claudiu Nicostratus

Simphorianus, and Castorius—were trade-companions, and fervent Christians. By their zeal they gained over Simplicius to Jesus Christ, at the time they were distinguishing themselves in the capital of the world by their perfection in the art of sculpture. Simplicius was a pagan; and wondering at the perfection and mastery with which the others performed their tasks, and the correctness, ease, and good taste displayed in them, he once asked them how it came that the marbles and other hard stones were so docile in their hands, and that their statues turned out so beautiful and perfect, whilst he broke his chisels on the hard blocks, and only produced mediocre work. Their leader, Simphorianus, answered: "We never take a chisel in our hands without first invoking the name of Jesus Christ; and, in my opinion, it is to this that any advantage we possess is to be attributed." The fervent sculptor then so lauded the religion of the Crucified, and dwelt so energetically on the importance of eternal salvation, that Simplicius was convinced, and resolved to embrace Christianity. After being properly instructed he was baptised at the hands of a holy bishop called Cyril.

Infinite is the mercy of God, who can draw each one with the chains of Adam, that is, who accommodates Himself to the innocent inclinations of man to bring him to the right faith. He is the fountain, origin, root, measure, and rule of all beauty, and hence there is no doubt that the lamp of faith, whether it is to calm the passions, which withdraw men from the centre of good taste, or to open up before his eyes new vistas in the supernatural and divine order, superior to all created beauty, lights the Christian artist to a view of pure and more enchanting things than ever won the admiration of the Gentiles. It is, then, indubitable that in equality of circumstances the Christian and virtuous sculptor will ever surpass the impious and demoralised one. Hence

at the time our saints received the crown of martyrdom sculpture lay prostrate, in the last stage of decadence. The Christians having retired from this profession, that they might not contribute by their labour to encourage idolatry, it was followed only by corrupt and degraded Gentiles, incapable of rising above the filth of their passions. The proof of this prostration is found in almost all the architectural monuments of that age. The triumphal arch erected by Constantine for his victory over Majentius, from the paucity of artists, was constructed for the greater part of the remnants of the arches of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius and of the remains of other public edifices.

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## II.

In the beginning of the fourth century our heroes were some of the few Christian sculptors who remained; and, according to their own confession, their principal merit was due to the ignominy of the cross. Their cleverness cost them their lives. It so happened that Diocletian was anxious to erect a public monument, and entrusted the work to our saints. Among the adornments it was to have were several animals and an idol. They wrought the former with great skill, but refused to make the latter lest they might be accomplices in idolatry. When the emperor saw the work he admired it very much, but inquired why they had not added the statue of the idol as he had ordered. Envious people are never wanting, particularly among persons of the same trade. The Gentile sculptors then answered, that Simphorianus and his companions, then absent, were Christians, and for nothing in this world would work the statue ordered. The emperor was greatly incensed by



this answer, and commanded the tribune, Lampridius, to try to bring them over to paganism by gentle means; but if they would not abandon the new superstition to condemn them to death. It is a shame to think that there are among Christians of the present day, not only artists who pretend to resuscitate those diabolical abortions which offend chaste eyes, and which the first Catholics smashed to pieces, but even wealthy people to encourage them, and persons in authority to expose them to the public gaze, to the no small scandal of the unwary. The faithful of those ages of fervour and innocence would not have tolerated it.

Our sculptors were taken prisoners, and the tribune ordered all the instruments of torture to be placed before them, to intimidate them, and drive them into apostasy. But he was mistaken. At first he promised them large rewards and high positions if they would only carve the statue. They at once answered that they would rather suffer a thousand deaths than prostitute their art in offence to their Creator; that all the riches and honours of the world were nothing compared with virtue and faith, which they should outrage if they helped their fellow-citizens to sin. The tribune then asked them if they were Christians. They answered that certainly they were, and if they knew anything, or were superior in anything to other sculptors, to Jesus they owed it, the Supreme Good, whom they invoked at the beginning of all their works.

Finding them firm in their noble resolution, he ordered them to be flogged and tortured. The saints suffered these torments with invincible courage, intoning praise to the God of victories. On this, as if struck by a thunderbolt, the unjust judge suddenly fell dead, and his soul was buried in hell. When the news reached the ears of the tyrant, it made him almost mad, and he ordered leaden boxes to be made, in which the con-

fessors of the faith should be enclosed, and cast into the river. In this way did the holy sculptors receive the palm of glory. They died like honourable and Christian artists, sooner than bring the stain of impiety on their trade. What a lesson for those nominal Christians, who for filthy lucre, prostitute their chisels and pencils in obscene and immoral works! Some days after their glorious triumph, a Christian named Nicodemus, providentially found their holy relics, and gave them honourable burial in his house. Their martyrdom, according to Baronius, occurred in 303, or 290 according to other writers. The Roman Martyrology places their feast on the 8th of November, on which day it is believed their deaths occurred, on the Via Lavicana, three miles from Rome.

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### ST. HUNNA, WASHERWOMAN.

#### I.

ABOUT the middle of the seventh century a noble and rich married pair, named Hunon and Hunna, the model of virtuous consorts, lived near Henovia, on the borders of Alsace. They had for the rule of their conduct that double charity which consists in loving God above all things, and our neighbour as ourselves, imitating the love of the Redeemer, who hesitated not to die, in order to give us all eternal life. The maxims of Christian wisdom appeared to them, as they are in reality, evidently preferable to all the vain principles of the world. Illumined by the unfailing light of Christianity, they regarded the rich inheritance they got from their ancestors as a gift from heaven; and looking on themselves as the depositaries and administrators of those

riches, they not only extended a liberal hand to the needy, but would have considered it a crime to dissipate them on unnecessary luxury, or in satisfying their passions. Their house was ever open to the poor; and their tenants, instead of being stripped by the avarice of their landlords, found in them aid in their necessities, and an efficacious assistance in their straits. In this way were they corresponding to the ends of Providence, according to the measure of divine grace, when a new friendship came to open up to them a wider field for their Christian virtues.

St. Deodatus, Bishop of Nevers, had resigned his see, with the object of retiring to the desert and leading an occult and penitential life. After spending some time as superior and father to the solitaries of Ebersheim, he longed for greater retirement and more freedom for contemplation, and went, to the great grief of the hermits, in search of another solitude, where he might enjoy more silence and repose. He thought he had found it to his taste in the neighbourhood of Ammerschweyer, at present a small village in High Alsace, in the diocese of Basil. By a special providence of God the saint fixed his hermitage near the dwelling of our holy people; and as the aroma of virtue quickly spreads, they soon discovered the humble solitary, and the solitary soon found those precious pearls who existed in the world without being known to it, or belonging to it. Easily are those joined in the bonds of friendship who have like virtuous sentiments, and with difficulty are those united who are animated by bad and repugnant ideas, affections, and ends. Taken, then, by the heroic virtues of Deodatus, Hunon and Hunna opened to him the door of their house with all the effusion of their soul, and put themselves under the guidance of his maxims and counsels. Hunna, though related to Aldaric, Duke of Alsace, disdained not to wash and mend the clothes of the poor

hermit. So great became the affection of these Alsacians for the renowned penitent, that our washerwoman, on bearing a son, desired the prelate to baptise and stand sponsor for it, and give it his own name.

It is indescribable how much those fervent consorts advanced under the holy bishop's direction. The world appeared to their eyes in all its repulsive nakedness, deserving only the contempt of a Christian soul. The world is an enemy whose perfidy, poverty, misery, and impotence are best seen when contemplated at a distance. Its goods and advantages are uncertain and passing, its pleasures frivolous and vain, its sorrows real and bitter, its dangers numerous and terrible, its promises deceitful and false. It appears impossible that after all the foul tricks it hourly plays on those who love it, anyone should allow himself to be taken in its snares, or be beguiled by its enchantments; and yet there are numbers who, after all their experience of it, still drain its poisonous cup, gilt over with the false lustre of pleasure and glory, though they immediately taste the bitterness of ignominy and despair. To free ourselves from its influence there is no remedy, no antidote but fasting and meditation, almsgiving and prayer. This was the daily bread of St. Hunna, and in virtue of it, though surrounded by wealth and comforts, she lived like one of the poor of Jesus Christ, with her heart disengaged from all things earthly. Animated by this spirit, and incited by the prelate's counsels, the fervent washerwoman ran like a giant along the path of perfection, and prepared herself for the new cross with which the Lord wished to still more purify her resignation and disinterestedness.

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## II.

The inhabitants of Ammerschweyer on frivolous pretexts began to annoy and persecute the innocent hermit, so that he was compelled to seek a more retired place, not to avoid their annoyance, for that only afforded him means of meriting, but to give himself up with more tranquillity to the contemplation of the holy mysteries. When the holy consorts heard of the saint's determination, they experienced no small grief. They offered to him their lands and possessions, they proposed to go to the authorities to demand justice, they tried every means to detain him ; but the saint of God refused these offers, and persisted in his resolution, telling them that he had not resigned his position in order to seek wealth, but to give himself up entirely to the Lord, and serve Him with all his strength in peace and tranquillity. Finding him resolute in going, and seeing that they should be deprived of a father whom they so much loved, and from whom they had learned to victoriously trample on the world and its maxims, they burst into tears. When the hour of his departure came, Hunon embraced him, and Hunna threw herself at his feet to get his benediction. Deodatus also felt the separation from his friends ; but God so willed it, and he went to the Vosgues mountains and took up his residence in a cave in a valley called Galilea, at the junction of the Rotbach and the Murta.

Our Alsacians now felt desolate, but submissive to the divine will. Hunna began the Christian education of young Deodatus, and impressed on his tender heart a holy horror of sin as the worst evil in the world. Happy the child who, from the first dawn of reason sees around him nothing but examples of virtue, and hears in his own family nothing but the praise of sanctity and the condemnation of vice, and drinks in, as they say, with

his mother's milk, the love of perfection ! Sooner or later grace will come to fructify the seed sown in that virgin soil, and make it produce rich fruits of good works which will fully repay the gardener's toil. Our washerwoman gathered them in abundance from the exquisite rearing she gave her son, who whilst at home led an irreproachable life, and later on entered the monastery founded by his godfather, where he died in the odour of sanctity.

Hunon and his wife knew not what course Deodatus had taken, but they preserved in their hearts indelible recollections of his friendship and affection, and received news of his whereabouts when they least expected. One night the Lord appeared to the noble Alsacian, and said : "How is it you allow your friend Deodatus to perish of want when an exile and fugitive for love of Me ?"—"Whither shall I go, Lord, for I know not where he is ?" The Lord told him to load some mules with provisions, and a guide would be provided for him. When he awoke he told Hunna his dream, and she encouraged him to do as he had been told, and put his trust in the Lord. They loaded the mules and allowed them to take whatever road heaven should direct. The Lord fulfilled His word, and led Hunon to the cave where the saint lived. The consolation this discovery gave the virtuous consorts, as well as the penitent prelate, is indescribable ; and henceforth they supplied all his wants, and made him a donation of some land on which to build a church, consecrated to St. Martin.

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### III.

Laden with these and like works of charity Hunon died, with evident signs of his eternal salvation. His

son Deodatus became a monk in the convent erected by the holy hermit, and his wife, renouncing all the goods of earth in favour of the indigent, became a servant of the poor. She attended them in their sickness like a loving mother, she carefully mended their clothes, and, above all, washed for them, which has gained for her the glorious title of the holy washerwoman. After making up her bundle of soiled clothes she might be seen going along the way with it murmuring her prayers. Then she began to wash, endeavouring to remove all stains without tearing, with her heart all the time fixed on God, whom she desired to serve in the poor. If she sometimes met a companion of the same business, and conversed with her, she usually spoke of things which might edify, and never of the faults of others, or on subjects of scandal. It is said that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, and as our washerwoman's soul was burning in the fire of charity, she could not see with indifference her neighbour's fame undermined by backbiting and slander, no less pernicious to those who express than to those who listen to them. The wash-place was to our saint a place destined for the sanctification of her soul and the advantage of her neighbours. If a light stain on a piece of cloth is the more repugnant to its owner the more noble he is, and the more valuable the garment, how much must it displease the eyes of our Saviour to discover the slightest blemish on a soul which had been purified in His sacred blood? More than once did like considerations animate Hunna to avoid venial sin, and if she did happen to fall into it, to run at once to the bath of penance to purge her heart of it. How different are the maxims of the world from the doctrine of Jesus? The slaves of the world would believe that Hunna lowered herself by cleaning poor children's things, washing the sheets of the needy, making the beds of the sick, binding their

sores, and giving them their medicine; but she recognised in each one of them the image of Jesus received in baptism, and venerated in Him the heir to the kingdom of eternal glory, and regarded herself as honoured in being allowed to do them these services, so debasing in the eyes of a corrupt world. In her eyes every office useful to humanity was noble when performed for an end so elevated as is the honour of God, and she gloried in being called the washerwoman of the poor of Jesus Christ.

Observing the toil it cost the servant of God to go so far to wash the clothes of the indigent, St. Deodatus was naturally moved to compassion, and in order to lighten her labour in some measure he prayed to the Omnipotent, and a spring of water burst out beside her dwelling. Hunna was glad, not because it relieved her of fatigue, for she knew that every step she had to take to the wash-place was counted by the angel, and entered in the Book of Life, to be rewarded in due time, but because that prodigy clearly proved how acceptable such work was in the sight of God. She thenceforth put forth new strength in washing for the poor and attending the sick. What care she would employ in washing for religious penitents, and what exquisite taste she would display in smoothing and doing up the corporals on which was to repose her beloved Jesus! What is certain is, that in this humble office in which many find their eternal ruin and perdition, our washerwoman met only an inexhaustible spring of celestial treasures.

Laden with virtues and merits, she slept the sleep of the just, and was buried in her husband's grave. The Lord rendered her memory glorious by many miracles, which induced Leo X. to place her in the catalogue of saints in 1520; and by his order, given at the instance of Ulrick, Duke of Vitemberg, her remains were exhumed, and exposed to public veneration, on the 15th of April of



that same year. The neighbouring people flocked to prostrate themselves devoutly before the saint's mortal remains, receiving singular favours through her intercession; but in a few years they had to lament the loss of this inestimable treasure. The Lutheran heretics of Hunnaweyr, hating everything that bore the aspect of Catholicity, in 1549 profaned the bones of their most glorious ancestors, and cast to the winds the ashes of our saint. Miserable men! As if they could thus prevent those ashes from rising on the last day at the imperious voice of God, and appearing glorious, to accuse them of their impiety and sacrilege! "Come, blessed one of my Father," the Son of the Most High will say to her: "come to enjoy the kingdom gained by thy sweat in the humble office in which in my eternal designs I placed thee, and in which thou didst know how to enamour my Heart."



VENERABLE ANTONIO ALONSO BERMEJO,  
LABOURER AND INFIRMARIAN.

I

THIS holy man was born in Nava del Rey on the 17th of January, 1678. His parents, Andrew Alonso and Isabel Bermejo, farmers, were connected with the principal families of the town, and occupied a decent position. Through a perverse custom, still existing in some parts of that country, Antonio was not regenerated in holy baptism till the twelfth day after his birth, being thus deprived for so long a time of the stole of innocence, which he carried unstained to the grave. This was in a great measure contributed to by the solid Christian education which his parents gave him. Under their fos-

tering care he grew up, admired as much for his modesty and his prompt obedience to all his parent's orders, as for the readiness and anxiety with which from his tenderest years he consecrated himself to exercises of piety and devotion. Guarded and charitable, he avoided all games in which others might be hurt, or the patience and virtue of the poor and the old imposed on.

These germs of virtue must have received considerable impetus when the grace of the Holy Ghost was shed over a heart so pure and well disposed, by means of the sacrament of confirmation, which he received at eight years of age with remarkable fervour. And so he began when very young to dedicate himself to mental prayer, to reciting the holy Rosary, to daily attendance at the holy sacrifice of the Mass, to visiting churches, and attentively listening to the Divine Word, conducting himself everywhere with Christian modesty and recollection. But where his fervour became most conspicuous, and excited most admiration and edification in his neighbours, was in the frequency with which he received the Bread of Angels. He appeared like an angel come down from heaven, and angelical were his manners and devotion. And yet, notwithstanding his being so favoured by heaven with graces, he began from those tender years not only to keep strict watch over his senses, and fly dangerous company and places, but also to look on his body as an enemy, depriving it of the pleasures to which nature inclined, and afflicting his innocent flesh with fasting and discipline. But all the rigour employed on himself was turned into love and compassion when he came to deal with his neighbour, particularly the poor. Few were the days on which he did not offer to the Lord the fragrant sacrifice of charity. When he got anything at dinner particularly agreeable, he willingly deprived himself of it, and together with a portion of his meal took it to the house of some poor person. Thus

did he lay the foundations of that burning charity which later on was to shine so brightly in him.

The Scripture says that man was born for labour, as the bird for flying. Antonio was dedicated by his religious parents to agriculture, in the hard labours of which he found means, not only of avoiding idleness, but of mortifying himself; he ever took on himself the hardest work, in which he discovered a vein of sweetness; and as if this were not enough, he continued his fasts, disciplines and other mortifications suggested to him by his ardent desire to suffer for Jesus Christ. The practices of piety, prayer, and the frequenting of the sacraments, far from suffering from his new occupations, received rather increased brilliancy and lustre. He lost no opportunity of making new progress in virtue, and without neglecting his duties, he knew how to find occasions for communing with God, both in the midst of his occupations and in some hours of rest. They say that will does more than strength; and as Alonso had no other desire than to please God with all his soul, nothing of all the Lord inspired him with appeared to him difficult or impossible.

On Holy Thursday, 1695, he was praying before the Blessed Sacrament exposed in the monument, when he felt his soul illuminated with such splendid light and so clear a knowledge of the Incarnation of the Word and of the mystery of Redemption, that, inflamed in divine love, he resolved to renounce all the world loves, and embrace the cross of toil and pain to imitate Jesus, and correspond to the immense love manifested for us in the august Sacrament. Thenceforth he adopted a class of life more poor, more retired, penitent, austere, and fervent. With the desire of availing himself of time, and giving God all the praise possible, he used to rise at midnight, and pray for an hour; to this persistent love of prayer must be added his wonderful attachment

to penance, by means of which he not only reduced his body to rigorous servitude, but converted it into a loving wound. The desire of daily following Jesus Christ more closely, suggested to him the idea of opening with a nail, his hands and feet and side; and he renewed the sores when he found them about to heal. This is an action we may admire, but not imitate—an action which he reiterated till prohibited by his confessor, whom he obeyed with submission and alacrity in many things temporal as well as in spiritual. When his father died, he was the consolation of his widowed mother, as well as of his grandfather Mark, whom, though he was now a young man, he continued to respect and obey the same as when a child. But the world daily caused him more and more disgust, and daily did he feel stronger and stronger desires to be divorced from it. And so, not content with putting on the habit of the Third Order of St. Francis, the rules of which he scrupulously complied with, but burning with the holy ardour of giving his life for his brethren, he entered the Order of St. John of God in 1700, in order to sacrifice himself in the service of the sick. The Lord, however, did not want him there, and after six months of novitiate he had, to his great pain and affliction, to leave from defect of sight. When he reached home he found that his mother was dead, and in a short time, too, he lost his grandfather, Mark Bermejo, who was the only temporal superior who remained to him.

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## II.

Being a just appreciator of the vanity of the world, he was not a little embarrassed on finding himself, in the

flower of his youth, free and uncontrolled, and owner of a large patrimony. With the object, undoubtedly, of seeking light from God, after obtaining the permission of his confessor, and the consent of his brother Andrew whom he left in charge of the place till he should return, he undertook a pilgrimage to Rome and Loretto. Poor, alone, and without travelling charges, he began that long and painful journey, trusting in Divine Providence, who protected him with singular graces. He once fell from a great height without injury. On another occasion he was cured of a fever by only commending himself to God. He encountered a great storm at sea, and he not only escaped safe and sound, but enjoyed celestial delights during the time the other passengers were almost dead from fright. All his toil appeared small in exchange for the sweet devotion with which the Lord inundated his soul when visiting the basilicas of the Eternal City. The same occurred to him in the sanctuary of Assisium, whither he went without knowing it on his way to Loretto. In this holy house the joy which filled his heart was still more intensified; absorbed in regarding that holy place where the Divine Word took our miserable nature, and the young Jesus worked so long at the trade of a carpenter at St. Joseph's and the Blessed Virgin's side, the four days he spent there appeared heaven to him. He went to confession to the Spanish Penitentiary, who dissuaded him from his intention of going to Palestine, and advised him to go to communion every day.

This good director may serve as an example to those who disapprove of daily communion on the plea of the respect and reverence to the august Sacrament, forgetting, on one hand, that the Council of Trent, directed by the Holy Ghost, shows its anxiety that this ancient and holy custom of the primitive Church should be restored; and on the other the holy desire manifested by the

Church to promote frequent communion by the profusion with which the vicars of Jesus Christ open the treasures of her indulgences to encourage it. Antonio was far from considering himself worthy to daily approach this heavenly banquet; but knowing, on one hand, that we have in it medicine for our infirmities, alleviation in our toil, consolation in our afflictions, company in our solitude, support in our struggles, light in our darkness; like a sick, sad, solitary, weak, ignorant pilgrim, he infinitely rejoiced that a door was opened to him to find a remedy for all his ills. But we do not pretend to recommend this frequency to those who are the slaves of the devil, or frequently fall into grave faults, we only wish to reprehend those who would condemn this practice in pious people, who may fall again and again into light faults, which they are struggling to eradicate. It is hard when the Lord is crying out for people to eat His flesh, and souls are hungering for it; it is hard, indeed, that the stewards would prevent them from taking that which the Lord is willing to give and orders them to distribute. Who doubts that this narrowness of spirit should be bewailed in tears of blood? For who would not weep to see that when the hand of God is so liberal, that of His servants should be so close? that when Jesus is prodigal of the property which cost Him His blood, they should be so miserable in what cost them nothing?

Happy did Alonso consider himself when he found one to thus open to him the source of infinite deserts, which he himself would never have ventured to approach. Joyfully he returned to Spain, resolved to avail himself of this holy advice, and being yet doubtful of the kind of life most suited to the sanctification of his soul, he undertook another pilgrimage to Santiago, of Galicia, to make sure in a matter of such importance. The Lord blessed his desires. A sudden light illumined

his mind, and he resolved to dedicate himself to works of charity in the hospital of St. Michael, in his native place, converted by carelessness into a den of scandal and idleness. When he returned, having persuaded his brother Andrew, by force of entreaty, to join him in the life he proposed to lead, he went with him to the poor-house to attend the inmates. Owing to the diligence of the two brothers, and the expense they privately underwent, that establishment was very much improved. Becoming poor for sake of the poor, Antonio begged from door to door and in the neighbouring villages for them, receiving his share of insults and rebuffs. But this was what the servant of God wanted. For two years the brothers continued thus united in their work, at the end of which time Andrew died, full of joy for having listened to his brother's advice; for it is only in that hour that good works inundate the heart with consolation.

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### III.

This death left Alonso master of a rich inheritance, and at entire liberty to sacrifice it for the benefit of his neighbour. Sell, says the Lord, all you possess, and give to the poor, and you shall have a reward in heaven. Acting on this holy counsel, the holy man renounced all he had, and made a donation of it to the Hospice of Nava, which should be converted into a hospital for the sick poor. The sale realised 1,500 guineas, besides ready money, which also was considerable. And he transferred it all by deed, reserving only three guineas for his funeral expenses, and a room and rations in the establishment, in which he purposed continuing his services. This heroic sacrifice induced others to endow *the hospital* with new alms, and thus the ancient edifice

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was soon transformed. Not only were the necessary offices erected, but a beautiful church was built. Antonio worked at the building like a labourer, carrying stones and mortar with so much humility and anxiety, that he edified all who saw him. But some of his relatives did not look on it so, for they saw their hopes defrauded of some day succeeding to the wealth which was not theirs, and so, besides criticising his noble conduct, they heaped opprobrium and insult on the saintly man, calling him, among other things, an inhuman hypocrite. Envy gnawed and moved their viper tongues. To this unexpected tempest of outrages Alonso opposed an unalterable meekness and sweet charity. "My dear friends, be patient, for God's sake," he would answer to their complaints, and he interiorly blessed the Lord for allowing him the happiness of suffering for His honour.

The bitterness with which some of them persecuted him would appear incredible if it did not rest on the clearest evidence. One of them, not content with abusing him in words, laid hands on him and beat him severely. The meek lamb had recourse to no other defence than that of the saints—to pray for the wretch, and suffer for the love of God. The wound inflicted on him during the beating spread and mortified, destroying an eye, and terribly deforming his face, causing him indescribable and acutest pain. Antonio suffered it with pleasure, without uttering the slightest complaint against his aggressor. The doctors looked on the preservation of his life as a miracle. In spite of all this, and of other infirmities which supervened, he not only gave thanks to God for making him a participator of the chalice of His Passion, but continued his occupations, his labours, and his penances. As if he were the dregs of the hospital, he always took the lowest offices on himself without ever claiming any superiority. Having chosen the office of infirmarian, he punctually and



willingly obeyed the stewards, to whom he rendered a strict account of his charge. His charity was edifying

When a sick man entered that holy retreat, the servant of God would come to his bed and tenderly console him inspiring him with patience and resignation, and sometimes even with desires of suffering more for Jesus Christ. He did not wait for the last moments to have the Sacraments administered to them, but taking the matter in time, he disposed and aided them to die like good Christians. His charity was not extinguished by their death, but extended beyond the grave. He had great devotion to the faithful departed, particularly those who died in his hospital, and offered for their eternal repose communions, rosaries, *Vias Crucis*, perances, Masses, getting some said for the same object and ceasing not to offer suffrages till his generous heart was satisfied.


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#### IV.

Nor had he less care for the corporal health of the poor. Thus, for instance, when he heard that sham prevented anyone from coming to the hospital, he would go immediately to his house and rest not till he carried him in his arms to it. There he heaped on him, like a loving mother, all kinds of attention and care, avoiding not contact with the leprous, or the dressing of the most repulsive sores. He had to struggle much to overcome the natural dislike he felt in the beginning but his Christian valour was roused by obstacles, and he came off triumphant. As the income of the house was not sufficient to meet the expenses, he used to go out to the neighbouring villages, particularly in harvest and vintage time, to make a collection of wheat and wine. If his own granaries and cellars could not contain what

he got he sent the surplus to the great hospital of Medina del Campo. He experienced many consolations in these exercises of charity, but he also met with many annoyances and insults. Even some of the employes of the house treated him with harshness and disrespect. On a certain occasion he received outside the hospital a blow from a baker, and following literally the counsel of the Gospel, he turned his other cheek to the aggressor. This event, happening in the public square of the town, excited the indignation of the people, and the criminal was taken prisoner. Feeling for the offender's misfortune, Antonio went before the magistrates to ask pardon for him; but he was unable to obtain it at first. However, he prayed and besought so hard that at last the magistrates had to yield to his entreaties.

Let no one believe when he beholds Antonio so well employed in Martha's offices that he neglected those of Mary. He was so economical of time that he knew how to reconcile both, so that neither the care of the sick interfered with his prayers, nor the exercises of piety impeded his labours. His food was very sparing, his sleep short, his conversation affable and always about things useful to souls. So that, never losing an instant, he always found time for everything he wished to do. Early in the morning he arose, and after offering his works to God, he commenced the holy exercise of the *Via Crucis*. After devoutly going over the stations, he extended himself on a cross, and there meditated on the crucifixion of his beloved Jesus, and then standing up and leaning on the cross with his arms extended, he considered the sufferings of Christ crucified. When this pious practice was over he scourged his shoulders, and then spent an hour in meditation. After disposing himself thus he went very early to the Augustinian church, passing by the cemetery, where he would pray a short time for the faithful departed. If he arrived before the



door was opened, he knelt down outside and waited. His modest conduct in the temple of the Lord was an edifying spectacle. He spent his time in it in hearing Mass, at which he received the Holy Eucharist, or in visiting the Blessed Sacrament and several altars, or in saying long prayers and going to confession. He left his heart with Jesus, when he at last had to go to attend the sick, and remained with Him in spirit keeping Him spiritual company. On his return to the hospital he tenderly visited his sick, attended to their wants and consoled them, mingling with his habitual labours the holy rosary, the reading of pious books, and other devout exercises.

With the object of animating his material occupations with charity, besides spending some time in meditation at three o'clock in the evening and alternating his duties with other devotions, he divided the hours of the day and the night into five parts, for each of which he had some mystery of the Passion or a part of the dolorous rosary appointed. Sometimes when engaged with his sick he imagined he was in the Garden of Gethsemani or in Pilate's hall in company with Jesus; at others, when returning home with a bundle of brambles on his shoulders, he followed Jesus in thought ascending the hill of Calvary oppressed by the heavy cross, and again when attending at the bedside of a dying man he had the eyes of his consideration fixed on Jesus in His agony. In this way all his occupations closely united him to Jesus. During the day, besides reciting the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin and attending to all the ceremonies of the Church which he could without infringing on charity, he frequently examined his conscience, made repeated spiritual communions, and endeavoured to instruct children and the ignorant in the Christian doctrine. However, his favourite and characteristic prayer was the Way of the Cross, which he repeated

every evening. When the servants and others of the faithful were collected in the hospital church, the servant of God began the visit of the stations, and at each gave expression to such considerations and affections that he moved the most hardened hearts, and not seldom brought back stray sheep to the fold of the Lord. How many through this commendable exercise rose to the heights of meditation so beneficial to souls !

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## V.

In order to approach more nearly to the religious state and aspire to evangelical perfection, he bound himself by the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, which he observed with supreme fidelity. After he renounced his property in favour of the hospital, he lived in the poorest way, and never got gift or present made to himself which he did not immediately employ in the service of the sick. He had no fixed furniture or room for himself, but put up in any corner, changing from one place to another as charity or circumstances required. He dressed like the lowest of the servants : his inside and outside covering was a piece of rough cloth ; he wore an old broken white hat and shoes which were cast in the hospital, and it was only through obedience he got a new suit. His food consisted of some broth and bread which the sick had left. Wine he never took till the last years of his life, and then only through obedience. Nor even then did he drink it pure, but mixed it with plenty of water. The more strictly to observe the fast, which was always more rigorous on the eves of the Blessed Virgin's feasts and the saints of his devotion, he persistently refused all invitations. The Augustinians, who thought a great deal of him, sometimes asked him

to dine with them, but they could never induce him to go. In his journeys he occasionally felt obliged to accede to the wishes of his host, but he did it with such repugnance that in order not to afflict him they had to let him alone to mortify himself as he wished. He also avoided every solace he could give his senses; and in all his travels, guarding against the satisfaction of his natural curiosity, he thought only of developing the spirit of piety which animated him. To the three vows he joined that of seeking in all things the greater honour and glory of God, a vow which, in imitation of St. Teresa and St. Francis of Sales, he fulfilled with the greatest exactness, but without falling into ridiculous scruples.

Add to this continual mortification what he had to suffer from the onslaughts of evil spirits, who sometimes during his meditation made even corporal attacks on him, which almost deprived him of life. Neither in these struggles nor in his tribulations did he seek relief, being anxious to drain to the dregs the chalice of the passion. "I know well," he said one day to a friend, "I know well that if I appealed to Jesus Christ, or to St. Joachim, and said: 'Have pity on this poor old man,' I should get relief at once, but I don't do so, for I think it suits me better to suffer." He only asked for patience and strength to bear his cross, which he valued above all treasures.

His virginal purity was in keeping with the lustre of his other virtues. Terrible were the assaults of the enemy from which he had to defend this delicate virtue, but armed with prayer and fasting he gained new laurels in every struggle. In vain did the impure spirit disturb his imagination with foul images without respect for the exercises of piety or even for the Holy Eucharist; for he could never induce him to lend an ear or even to desist from his devout practices. His edifying modesty served

as an outwork for the protection of this angelical gift. He went about everywhere with his eyes cast on the ground, without looking at anyone, without joining in idle conversation, without listening to superfluous talk, respiring modesty in his countenance, gait, actions, and words, so as to appear rather an angel from heaven than a man of earth. In reward of his angelical purity the Lord gave him the power to assist those attacked by the flesh. Among other examples it is related that a young man who was violently tempted and knew not what to do, went to the servant of God and candidly told him of his soul's struggle. Antonio pitied the young man's weakness, and exhorted him to resist valiantly, and to rest tranquil in the arms of Providence, who would never abandon him. He tenderly threw his arms round him, and from that moment the tempest which agitated his afflicted heart was dissipated.

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## VI.

This was not the only extraordinary grace with which God had enriched him. Besides the gift of curing by simply imposing his hands, he also had that of prophecy, of which he specially made use in foretelling the death or cure of the sick. He also availed himself of it for the consolation of the afflicted, the following, among many other cases, being worthy of notice: "One day, in 1740, a lady, bathed in tears and buried in grief, entered the hospital church. She belonged to one of the highest families in the place, and had the misfortune to be married to a bad husband who led a scandalous life. She had gone to the church to pour out her sorrows to the Lord. Sad thoughts occupied her mind whilst praying before the altar. On raising her eyes she saw the servant of God before her. Without waiting for the

dejected woman to speak, he told her the cause of her affliction would soon cease, and everything would turn out to her wishes. It is easy to imagine the surprise and joy of the good lady on hearing such unexpected news—a joy and surprise doubly increased when after three days her husband broke away from the illicit bonds in which he was involved and dedicated himself to his domestic duties. Thus did the Lord reward his zeal for the divine glory, for the increase of which God sometimes granted him the favour of bilocation, so that he might at once attend to his duties in the hospital and pursue his devotions in another place.

Every event, prosperous or adverse, served to stimulate the divine flame which burned in his breast, and which he desired to communicate to the bosoms of all. For this purpose he tried to promote or establish in all parts the pious congregations of the School of Christ and of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. This zeal turned a poor farmer and infirmarian into the apostle of his district. Not content with trying in every possible way to put an end to all scandals which came under his notice, he endeavoured to excite in all a horror of sin and a love of virtue, for which purpose he paid several visits to the neighbouring villages.

Whenever he could leave the hospital without inconvenience to the sick, he provided himself with beads, scapulars, medals, books and hymns, which pious people freely supplied him with, and armed with all necessary faculties, he would go to the country to help in the conversion of sinners. Immense plains, spreading out to the horizon like the ocean, surround La Nava, and on these level tracts are found rich cultivated land, vineyards, and some fruit-trees, but none other to afford shade to the weary traveller. Over these plains journeyed Alonso, guiding his donkey with one hand and counting his beads with the other. As soon as he reached a village

he waited on the parish priest, and showing the bishop's licence, asked him to call together his parishioners to the church to say the Rosary and perform the *Via Crucis*.

Under Antonio's advice and exhortation, who went about the village for the purpose, many would flock to the church when they heard the bell. As soon as they were collected he began the Rosary and then went through the *Via Crucis*, as he was accustomed to do in the hospital. Admirable were the fruits he gathered from these devout exercises, and numerous the conversions of hardened sinners. He also taught the Christian Doctrine to the children and the ignorant, and he exhorted all to join the confraternities of Carmel and the Rosary, whose treasures of indulgences he explained in order to induce them. He invited those whom he considered fitting objects to join the Third Order of St. Francis and the School of Christ. Finally, before leaving the village he distributed objects of devotion, and collected the offerings freely given to him for the sick, and then moved elsewhere. If the prodigious changes brought about in these excursions were pleasing to him, not less so was the harvest of insults which he reaped in some places.

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## VII.

The devil, jealous for the losses he suffered through our saint's exertions, stirred up opposition to him in several places where he was outrageously treated. Sorrowing over the offence offered to God, Alonso bore all with heroic meekness, but did not give up his apostolic exertions. The Lord blessed his efforts, as Antonio himself declares in these words: "I used to gladly return to



those places where I was ill-received and worse treated, and I would leave them full of consolation and laden with copious fruits. He met with many sad adventures, the following being one of the most remarkable. With the permission of the Ordinary and parish priest, the servant of God was performing his usual exercises in a certain church; and whilst he was explaining to his audience the indulgences of the Scapular of Mount Carmel, the *Via Crucis*, and other devotions, a monk entered, and incited by an exaggerated and blind zeal, scolded him and kicked him out of the church. The humble servant of God, who daily contemplated Jesus Christ silent and suffering in the hands of His enemies, bore all with unalterable patience, and the people, annoyed at the incident, went home. One would think this should have appeased the monk's wrath; but no, for he went to the magistrate to ask him to expel the man of God from the village, which was done; for an official soon presented himself to Antonio and ordered him to leave if he wished to avoid imprisonment. He obeyed for the time, but he soon returned, and was received joyfully by all.

It would keep us too long to relate all the adventures which befell him in his excursions, which in the end he had to abandon from growing age, and by his confessor's orders.

Besides other painful ailings, he was tormented by an intestinal hernia, which frequently caused him intense agony. He also suffered for some time a pulmonary affection. Despite all his ailments, he would have continued his penances and labours, had not his confessor interfered to prevent him. He told the latter and another friend, years before, the time of his death, and he looked on himself as a condemned criminal preparing for it. As his conscience was free from sin, he awaited his last hour with great peace, and spoke of it to all as were a delightful journey. On the 12th of Novem-

ber, 1758, he was attacked by a violent fever, which scarcely allowed him time to hear Mass and receive communion. When he went to bed, through obedience, he did not lose his gaiety of disposition, and remarking that they had put clean sheets on it, he said, in a joke: "We are going to die in the fashion." Comforted on the 14th with the last sacraments, which he asked for and received with edifying transports of love and joy, without delirium or agony he slept the sleep of the just, at six in the evening, while expressing these words: "Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit." His soul awakened in eternity as clean and pure as it had left the baptismal font.

As soon as the news of his death had spread the neighbours went in crowds to view the venerable remains of the servant of God. It was necessary to lock the door that he might be decently dressed, and to prevent pious thefts of the things belonging to him. When removed to the hospital church, all endeavoured with holy anxiety to touch his body with beads, medals, and other pious objects; everyone published his heroic virtues and desired to carry away some memento of one whom they revered as a saint. His body, flexible and coloured as in life, far from causing repugnance or disgust, excited devotion and reverence. The Lord wished to glorify his holy servant from his very death. During the three days he was exposed to public veneration three sick people were instantaneously cured. Sister Hernandez, a Capuchin nun in the monastery of La Nava, when awaiting her agony after receiving the last sacraments, was suddenly cured by the application of a cloth moistened in the fresh blood flowing from the saint's body.

The funeral offices were crowdedly attended on the 18th by people of the town and from all the villages about. He was buried in a rich tomb, and the epitaph

placed over him told that there lay the mortal remains of Antonio Alonso, sent by God to the district as a model of all virtues, and especially of charity to the poor. Pius IX. on the feast of the Immaculate Conception 1860, declared before the Catholic world that Antonio had cultivated the Christian virtues in a heroic degree.

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## Reading from the History of the Holy Family:

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### THE LAST SUPPER, AND THE PASSION OF JESUS.

THE same day, Wednesday, the 12th of Nisan, or the 1st of April, on which our Lord proposed the foregoing parables, He reminded the disciples that the pasch would be celebrated in two days, and repeated anew that the Son of Man would be delivered up to His enemies and crucified. This very day also the priests formed the resolution of putting an end to Jesus at all hazards; and on the same day also Judas Iscariot engaged with the enemies of our Saviour to place Him in their power for the price of thirty pieces of silver, or about two guineas.

Thursday, the 2nd of April, Jesus told Peter and John to go and prepare the feast of the pasch. They answered: "Where wilt thou that we prepare?" He answered, "Behold as you go into the city, there shall meet you a man carrying a pitcher of water: follow him into the house where he entereth in. And you shall say to the good man of the house: Where is the guest-chamber, where I may eat the pasch with my dis-

ciples?" They went; and everything turning out as Jesus had said, they made arrangements befitting the solemnity of the feast. The following day, when at table, He declared that among them was a traitor who should deliver Him up to His enemies. They were deeply grieved at this news, and began to ask one by one: "Is it I, Lord?" When it came to Judas's turn, Jesus said it was, but in so low a tone that the other Apostles did not comprehend. Turning then to another subject, He said to them: "With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer." Our Lord wished to give us the greatest proof of the love He bore us by hiding Himself among us in the Holy Sacrament, instituted in this Last Supper, and already prefigured in that of the lamb, which the Jews were bound to eat every year. Then again arose among the Apostles the former dispute about who should be the principal among them. Jesus, in order to cure that disordered love of self-excellence, beyond inculcating anew that the primacy among them should be marked by humility and the desire to serve and lower themselves before others, rose from the table and washed their feet. When Peter saw our Saviour at his feet, he exclaimed: "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" And Jesus answered: "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Simon replied: "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Jesus answered: "If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with me." And Peter then said: "Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head." Jesus said: "He that is washed, needeth not but to wash his feet, but is clean wholly. And you are clean, but not all;" thus making reference to Judas who was to betray Him. When this humble ceremony was over, Jesus returned to the table, and exhorted them to ever follow His example by giving each other mutual proofs of charity and deference. Then recollecting the treason of

Judas, which had pierced His Heart, He was disturbed in Himself, and repeated anew that one of them should betray Him. And they looked at one another, astonished at the persistence of Jesus, and they again asked: "Lord, is it I?" And Jesus again indicated to Judas that He was aware of his treason. Notwithstanding all, whilst He was yet at supper, He took bread, and blessed and broke it, and dividing it among His disciples, He said: "Take and eat, this is my body which is given for you. Do this for a commemoration of me." In like manner, having taken the chalice, He said: "Drink ye all of this: for this is my blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many unto the remission of sins." Well may we say that not all the waters of the world could extinguish the charity of Jesus Christ: not all His tribulations and the ingratitude He met with could prevent Him from instituting this Divine Sacrament, in order that He might remain with us to the consummation of the world. To such lengths did the immense love He had for us lead Him! But, beholding in Judas all those who should sacrilegiously eat of this celestial Bread, He again complained of such black treason. Then Peter made signs to John, who was reclining on the bosom of our Divine Master, to ask Him who was the traitor. Our Lord answered: "He it is to whom I shall reach bread dipped;" and He gave it to Judas, and with the mouthful Satan entered into his heart. At the same time Jesus said to him: "That which thou doest, do quickly." The other disciples attributed this to some business he had to do, as it was Judas carried the purse. It was now night, and the traitor rising up, went to consummate his diabolical crime against that Lord from whom he had received nothing but favours

When the supper was over, they gave thanks and

prepared to leave for Mount Olivet. Our Lord told them He was going to leave them, and that for the present they could not follow Him; but He charged them to love one another, that all men should thus know they were His disciples. When Peter interrupted Him, and asked whither He was going, our Lord answered that for the present he could not come. "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not: and thou being once converted, confirm thy brethren. All you shall be scandalised in me this night. But after I shall be risen again, I will go before you into Galilee." Peter answered: "Although all shall be scandalised in Thee, I will never be scandalised." Jesus replied: "Amen I say to thee, that in this night, before the cock crow, thou wilt deny me thrice." Then Peter said: "Yea, though I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee." And the other disciples made like protestations. In the end Jesus left with them for a country place, known by the name of Gethsemani. But they were not idle on the way, for the Divine Master animated them to suffer whatever they might be exposed to for his name: He exhorted them to remain faithful to His doctrine: He promised to send them the Divine Spirit, who should teach them all things necessary to carry out the work commenced; and He spoke to them of the circumstances of His passion, death, and resurrection, that they might understand that He knew all, and that if He died, it was of His own free will and election.

Having passed the brook Cedron, they arrived at the Garden of Gethsemani, which was well known to Judas, as he had sometimes gone to the same place in company with our Redeemer. At the entrance He told the Apostles to remain there whilst He should retire a little

to pray. He took with Him, however, Peter, James, and John, and He had scarcely entered the garden with them when He fell into so profound a sadness that He exclaimed: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." And then He said to them: "Stay you here and watch with me." And when He had left them about the cast of a stone, He fell flat on the ground and prayed: "Father, all things are possible to Thee, remove this chalice from me, but not my will but Thine be done." At the end of a long time He went to His disciples, and finding them asleep, He said to Peter: "Couldst thou not watch one hour? Watch ye and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." Then He retired a second time, and continued His prayer, saying the self-same words. He returned to His Apostles, and finding them still asleep, He went back a third time to pray in the same way. An angel appeared to comfort Him, and Jesus, the more bitter His suffering and agony, the more intensely did He pray. But such a weariness and sadness took possession of His soul, that He sweated blood, which ran down even on the ground. Then He rose animated, and returning to His disciples, and finding them again asleep of sadness, He said to them: "Sleep ye now and take your rest. It is enough: the hour is come; behold the Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go. Behold, he that will betray me is at hand." And He was yet speaking, when Judas arrived with a band of soldiers, to whom he had given as a sign that whomsoever he should kiss was Jesus; and he told them to seize Him at once and guard Him well lest He should escape from them. Then Judas approached our Saviour and kissed Him, and said: "Hail, Rabbi, or Master." Jesus asked him sweetly for what purpose he had come, and when he kissed Him, said: "Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?"



The soldiers then presented themselves, and Jesus received them, saying: "Whom seek ye?" They shouted: "Jesus of Nazareth." And our Lord answered: "I am He." At these words they all fell to the ground as if struck by lightning. He asked them a second time: "Whom seek ye?" They shouted anew: "Jesus of Nazareth." And our Lord mildly answered: "I have told you that I am He;" and pointing to His disciples, He added: "If, therefore, you seek me, let these go their way." With this permission they rushed like wolves on the meek Lamb. When His disciples saw this they wished to defend Him, and said: "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" And Peter drew his sword, and with one stroke cut off the ear of Malchus, a servant of the high-priest. But our Lord said to Peter: "Put up thy sword into the scabbard. The chalice which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? . . . All that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot ask my Father, and He will give me presently more than twelve legions of angels. How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that so it must be done?" And turning to the crowd, He asked them to allow Malchus to approach, and He cured his wound by simply touching his ear. And then He said to the magistrates and priests who had come to take Him: "Are you come out as to a robber, with swords and staves to apprehend me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and you did not lay hands on me. . . . But this is your hour and the powers of darkness." As if He had said: "Now is the hour come when I must die for the world: here I am ready." And then they bound Him as a malefactor, and His disciples abandoning Him, escaped, as He had prophesied.

The unfeeling crowd led Him to Annas, the father-in-

law of Caiphas, who was the high-priest of that year, as the former had been the year before. Peter and John, anxious to know how all this would end, followed the Divine Master at a distance. John was known to the high-priest, and so was able to enter the hall, or court of Annas, whilst Peter remained without, till the beloved disciple obtained permission from the portress for him to come in. At the door the portress said to Peter: "Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?" And Peter answered: "I am not;" and then he went to warm himself at the fire with the other servants and ministers of the palace.


In the meantime the examination commenced. Annas asked Jesus about His doctrine and His disciples. Our Lord answered with all liberty that He had taught nothing in secret, and that all the Jews were witnesses of the doctrine He had proclaimed and defended in the temple and synagogue; and he might ask them. At this prudent response of our Saviour one of the attendants gave Him a blow, and said: "Answerest Thou the high-priest so?" And Jesus said: "If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil: but if well, why strikest thou me?" Annas then sent Him to Caiphas, who probably lived in the same palace, and in his rooms several priests and doctors had met to question our Lord, who was tied fast lest He might escape. Here among various false witnesses, who were suborned, but were not found agreeing, two came forward to swear that our Saviour had boasted that He could destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days. But still all this was not sufficient to condemn a man to death, desire it as they might. Jesus, however, observed complete silence. Then Caiphas rose up and conjured Him by the living God to tell him if He was the Messiah. Jesus not only answered in the affirmative, but assured them that they

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should one day see Him seated on the right-hand of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven with glory and majesty. On this the high-priest rent his garments, and exclaimed: "He hath blasphemed, what further need have we of witnesses? Behold now you have heard the blasphemy. What think you?" And all cried out: "He is guilty of death." And thus sentenced, they delivered Him over to the soldiery to divert themselves with their innocent prisoner. And after binding His eyes, some of them spat on Him, and others beat Him, saying: "Prophecy unto us, O Christ: who is he that struck Thee?"

Peter had continued warming himself at the fire during the investigation. And some of the bystanders, perhaps urged to it by the talk of some maid-servant, said to him: "Art not thou also one of His disciples?" And He again denied it, and said: "I am not." Then one of the servants, a kinsman of Malchus, whose ear Peter had cut off, asked him how he could deny it when he saw him in the garden, and they all joined in the assertion, for his very accent proved he was a Galilean. And Peter protested and swore that he knew not the man, and on the moment the cock crew. The cock's voice brought to his recollection the prophecy of our Saviour, who from the hall where He was looked with eyes of compassion on Peter, who was proving himself ashamed of being His disciple. He immediately ran out filled with confusion, and bewailed his fault in bitter tears.

Another and sadder incident occurred that same morning. When Judas saw that Jesus was condemned, bewailing his crime, he went to the chief priests, and said to them: "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood." And they, as if they were not guilty of the same crime, answered: "What is that to us? Look




thou to it." The poor wretch, in despair at seeing those hyenas determined on consummating their crime, threw the price of his treason at the feet of the priests, and instead of appealing to the mercy of God, like Peter, put an end to his miserable life by hanging himself. Thus did the traitor expiate his sin in this life, and then plunge into the fire of hell for all eternity.

As soon as it was day, the magistrates and doctors, after meeting in council, conducted Jesus to Pilate's tribunal, who was the governor of the province, that he might ratify the sentence already pronounced by them, because they themselves, being subject to the Romans, could not put it in execution. When they reached his dwelling, the Scribes and priests remained without, that they might not be contaminated, and prevented from eating the pasch: but the hypocrites had no scruple in delivering up the Innocent One to the Governor. The latter came out, and asked, "What accusation bring you against this man?" And they answered: "If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up to thee." Pilate then said: "Take Him you, and judge Him according to your law." But they shouted: "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death. . . . We have found this man perverting our nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, and saying that He is Christ the King." Pilate took Jesus apart, and asked Him if He was a King. Our Saviour answered that He was, but that His kingdom was not of this world. When the pagan judge saw that Jesus was innocent he went out and said to His accusers that he could find no crime in Him. But they shouted the louder, and said that He was a disturber, and left no town or village in peace from that to Galilee. When Pilate found that Jesus was a Galilean, he sent Him to

Herod, king, or tetrarch, of Galilee, who happened to be then in Jerusalem. Herod was long anxious to see Jesus, of whom he had heard so much, through the fame of His miracles. When our Saviour was brought before this new judge, the Scribes and Pharisees renewed their shouts and accusations against the undefended Prisoner. Herod put a number of questions to Him; but our Lord answered not a word. Astonished and indignant at such conduct, the tetrarch ordered Jesus to be clothed in a white garment, and taken back to Pilate, who on this occasion became reconciled to Herod, with whom he had previously been at enmity.

Pilate, having again examined our Saviour, declared to the Jews that neither he nor Herod found any crime in Jesus for which He deserved to die; and that it was enough to inflict some punishment on Him, and set Him free. But seeing that they clamorously insisted on His death, he had recourse to a custom the Jews had of liberating some delinquent on the feast of the pasch. To more easily obtain the pardon of Jesus, he gave them the choice between our Redeemer and Barabbas, a notorious robber, who was in gaol for homicide; but they, blinded by hatred, cried out that Jesus should die, and Barabbas be set free. When the judge saw his plans frustrated, he tried others, but finally, convinced that the people would be only appeased by blood, he allowed himself to be conquered by their cries, and ordered the Saviour of the world to be scourged. Then the soldiers took Him in hand, and not only scourged Him barbarously, but put a crown of thorns on His head, and placed a cane sceptre in His hand, and clothed Him in an old purple garment. Nor was this enough to satisfy those inhuman hearts; but, for greater mockery, they bent their knee before Him, and said: "Hail, King of the Jews." Pilate, believing that the very sight of Jesus in that sad plight would soften the heart of that sanguinary



multitude, brought Him out before all, and exclaimed : "*Ecce homo* : behold the man." But the priests and ministers, encouraged by this triumph, shouted more loudly : "Crucify Him." Pilate still wished to save Him, as well on account of His innocence, as of a vision his wife had on behalf of the Just One ; but the more he stood up in his defence, the more obstinately did the Jews cry out furiously, that if he set Him free he was no friend of Cæsar's, for whoever made himself king was Cæsar's enemy. Well, finally alarmed by these cries, and dreading a riot, he gave up his just intentions. He sat down in his tribunal, ordered water to be brought, and washing his hands, said, in a loud voice : "I am innocent of the blood of this just man : look you to it." But they cried out : "His blood be upon us and upon our children." It was about the third hour, or nine in the morning, when the sentence was pronounced, and the meek Lamb was delivered into the power of the cruel wolves, who were to inflict death on Him. The judge, however, wished to make one more effort ; so, when delivering Him to them, he said : "Behold your King." But they shouted, : "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him." Pilate answered : "Shall I crucify your King ?" "Crucify Him," they answered ; "we have no king but Cæsar." Yielding, then, to their clamours, he handed Jesus over to them to crucify Him.


Filled with infernal joy, they loaded this new Isaac with a heavy cross, and led Him out to Golgotha, or Calvary, a little hill to the north of the city. It is a tradition, that before leaving the confines of the city He met His Mother Mary, transpierced with grief, who followed Him, and witnessed the whole of the sad and tragic scene. As Jesus was exhausted by the scourging and the incredible tortures He had to endure, He several

times fell under the weight of His heavy burden. Then the soldiers, fearing lest He should die on the way, called Simon of Cyrene, and arranged with him to help our Lord to carry the cross. A great multitude of people followed Him, and many women wept, full of compassion at seeing Him suffer in such a way. Jesus was grateful, and turning to them, said: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. . . . For if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?" And two robbers also went in the crowd to be crucified along with Him. When they arrived at Calvary, they offered Him wine mixed with myrrh, but He would not drink it. By this our Saviour wished to show us that, for our sakes, He desired to experience all the bitterness of the sufferings about to weigh on Him. And in effect, with the cross lying on the ground, as some believe, or more probably raised, as others hold, they cruelly stripped Jesus, tearing off His garments, which, no doubt, were stuck to His wounds, and removed the crown of thorns which covered His head, and laid Him down to crucify Him with all cruelty and ignominy. To all did Jesus submit with admirable meekness, for love of us and our salvation. . . . Angels of heaven, all men, just and sinners, come here and behold the greatest proof of love the imagination can conceive—the Creator crucified to pay the debts of His creatures! When the Victim was stretched on the sacred wood, the executioners apply thick nails to His delicate feet and hands, and discharge on them heavy strokes of a hammer, and make torrents of blood spurt out to wash away the stains of our souls. The wicked people, far from melting with pity at sight of such a moving spectacle, cry out, with increased fury, against the innocent Lamb, insulting and mocking Him, gloat-

ing over the blood and the ignominy of the Saint of saints.

The two thieves were also put on crosses, one on either side of Our Redeemer. That of Jesus bore the following title, written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." In vain did the Scribes and Pharisees try to change the inscription, and substitute: "Who said He was King of the Jews." "What I have written, I have written," answered Pilate; and they could get him to make no change. The first words of Jesus on that infamous wood were words of grace and pardon for His executioners. "Father," He said, "pardon them, for they know not what they do." In the meantime the soldiers, after dividing by lot the Saviour's garments among them, making common cause with the implacable enemies of Jesus, mocked Him, saying: "You who could destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save thyself now. He saved others, let Him save Himself! Come down from the cross, and we will believe in thee." These taunts and many others like them did they and the people say, inspired by the vain triumph of His accusers.

One of the thieves also mocked and blasphemed Jesus, but the other rebuked him, saying: "Neither dost thou fear God, seeing thou art under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done no evil." Then addressing our Saviour He besought Him to remember him when He should enter into His kingdom. And Jesus answered him with this consoling promise: "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise." The bad thief, instead of imitating this salutary example, continued his blasphemies; and whilst the soul of the former went to enjoy the glory of Jesus, who descended





to Limbo to free from captivity the souls of the just of the Old Law, that of the latter fell into the unextinguishable fire of the abyss, to be there tortured for all eternity.

It was about eleven o'clock in the morning, at the end of the sixth hour, as St. Mark says, or the beginning of the ninth, as given by St. John, when the sun was obscured and darkness covered the face of the earth. Notwithstanding, the Jews and soldiers continued to mock our Saviour, and when He exclaimed: "*Eloi, Eloi, lamma sabacthani*:" "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me," some of the bystanders in derision remarked: "Behold he calleth Elias . . . Stay, let us see if Elias come to take him down."

Mary, Mother of the Crucified, Mary of Cleophas, Mary Magdalen, and St. John were at the foot of the cross, witnessing those torments and listening to those insults against the most beneficent of men. What state must the heart of that loving Mother have been in at sight of the sufferings of her Divine Son! Jesus regarded her, and indicating the Evangelist, said to His disconsolate Mother: "Woman, behold thy Son;" and then turning to the beloved disciple, He added: "Son, behold thy mother." And John recognised her as such from that hour.

Jesus afterwards, feeling thirst on account of the copious loss of blood from so many wounds, exclaimed: "I thirst." They moistened a sponge in vinegar and gave Him to drink. Having tasted it, He said aloud: "All is consummated."

It was the ninth hour, or three o'clock in the evening: the darkness had disappeared, and Jesus cried in a loud voice: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," and saying this He expired. Then the veil of the temple was rent, the earth shook, the rocks were split, the

graves were opened, and many dead came forth. When the Centurion saw the prodigies, with which nature bewailed the death of the Creator, he could not help glorifying God, saying: "Indeed this was a just man." And many of the spectators, participating in the soldier's sentiments, struck their breasts, and returned home penitent.

The Jews did not wish that the bodies should remain on the cross till the following day, because it was the great sabbath, or the day of the pasch, and they asked Pilate for leave to break the legs of the condemned, that they might die more quickly and be interred. This was done with the two thieves, because they had not yet expired; but when they came to Jesus they found Him already dead, and they contented themselves with opening His side with a lance, and from the wound blood and water immediately flowed. Blessed wound! because from it came the sacraments of the Church, as some Fathers tell us, and because it opened for us a short road to the Divine Heart of Jesus, the sweet dwelling of holy souls, and the consoling asylum of sinners. At sunset Joseph of Arimathea, a distinguished senator and a secret disciple of Jesus, went to Pilate and asked for permission to bury the sacred body before the sun went down. Having obtained permission, he went with Nicodemus in search of Our Saviour's body, and enveloping it in a sheet, they buried it in a new sepulchre made in a rock, in which no one had yet been placed. The pious women who had witnessed the death of our Lord, also accompanied the Queen of martyrs in the interment of her Son, that they might afterwards go with aromatic spices to anoint Him, according to the custom of the Jews. After this work of mercy they all returned to their respective homes, to rest on the feast of the great sabbath, as the law ordained. The priests, however,

fearing lest the disciples of Jesus would steal the sacred deposit, for the purpose of more easily spreading the report of His resurrection, placed guards on the sepulchre, and sealed the stone which closed the entrance.

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VENERABLE ALBINA.

# LIGHT FROM THE LOWLY.

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## Series XII.

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### ST. FRANCIS OF SIENNA, TANNER AND SOLDIER.

#### I.

DIVINE Providence gives us in this saint a palpable proof of His infinite mercy, and of the excesses to which passions unsubdued in the beginning can lead. Before Francis's birth his mother dreamt that she brought forth a monster, which should afterwards become a man—a prognostication of the perverse disposition of the son, and of his portentous conversion. He was born of decent and Christian parents, of the farming class, in Groti, a village of Tuscany, about six miles from Sienna, on the 3rd of December, 1211. He had scarcely attained the use of reason when he began to give indications of his evil inclinations, in spite of the efforts of his parents to train him in virtue. They sent him to school, but following the wicked inclinations of his contaminated heart, he frustrated the good desires of his

parents, Matthew Lipsi and Celedonia Daniel, laughed at the prudent advice of his masters, and heeding nothing but his depraved instincts, surrendered himself to idleness and corruption, so that he had to be expelled from the school as a confirmed curser and corrupter of his fellow-students. His mother's vision was already being verified, and she and her husband bewailed the early perversion of their child. Having exhausted all the means in their power to make him learn, they resolved to apprentice him to some trade to free him from idleness—the mother of all vices. They looked out for a good master-tanner to instruct him. He might well have learned among the skins the need of subjecting himself to severe discipline, in order to preserve himself intact from the corruption of the world; for as they must pass through several processes, and be submitted to the action of various chemicals to preserve them from corruption, and to soften them and make them fit for human use, so man must suffer the chemical action of tribulation, and submit to the knife of mortification, if he wishes to preserve himself free from sin, and to attain Christian perfection. But our tanner was far from this. He soon tired of the work, which would have brought him a decent competence, and threw it up, to the great annoyance of his parents.

Francis was unworthy of living in their company, and God soon deprived him of both father and mother, who, in the fruitless education of their son, purified their Christian patience and piety. Free now from those who were a drag on him, he gave himself up to all kinds of licentiousness. He had familiar intercourse with men of bad life; his friends were the most dissolute youths, thieves and ruffians; he frequented the worst kind of houses and taverns; in a word, he spent day and night in the most criminal dissolution. By such a course of life he soon spent his inheritance, and having no means of subsistence, he did not hesitate to interfere with his

neighbour's property in order to satisfy his appetite for gambling, rioting, and other more abominable vices. He went from sin to sin, he jumped from precipice to precipice, without heeding the counsels or warnings of friends or strangers, and he would soon have ended his days on the gallows only he lived in a time of disorder and turbulence.

The towns of Sienna and Orbieto were at war, and Francis became a soldier. Though the profession of arms is not inconsistent with virtue, and amid the roar of artillery heroes have been found, not more conspicuous for their valour than their virtue, yet the circumstances surrounding armies are not the most suitable for the reformation of a corrupt youth. What might be foreseen occurred. Outrunning the disorders of the time, and despising military discipline, he gave himself up, if possible, to greater excesses than ever. Not content now with stealing, he joined other wicked men, and assassinated all who opposed him in any way, without regard to condition or sex. To cover his crimes he frequently changed his disguise, dressing sometimes as a farmer, sometimes as a student, now as an Italian, and again as a foreigner; he one day wore false whiskers, and another was without beard, availing himself of every stratagem to more readily surprise his victims.

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## II.

As may be easily imagined, cursed gambling, in which so many ruin their property, and bring misery on their families, was one of Francis's vices and one of the principal incentives to his disorders. They say that on a



certain occasion he lost even his shirt, and cursing his bad luck, he said to the other gamblers that he wished he had lost his eyes, for he did not believe in Him who gave them to him. On the heels of the imprecation came the punishment. The poor wretch became blind, and he was dismissed from the army as useless, and found himself abandoned in his misfortune. His corporal blindness served to open the eyes of his soul to the light of faith. Finding himself abandoned by all, without a friendly hand to reach him a bit of bread; he remembered his parents, his masters and preceptors, whose counsels he had despised, and realising the enormity of his sins, he burst into a flood of tears. Rarely does the Christian training of childhood fail to produce fruit even in souls as degraded as that of Francis. The instruction he got from his parents about the infinite mercy of God induced him to fly to His bosom, imploring pardon for his past transgressions. He did not now close his ears to the voice of grace; and as formerly he would, in his diabolical fury, utter blasphemies against God and the Blessed Virgin, now, on the contrary, appealing to our Lady's intercession, and bathed in tears, he publicly confessed his crimes with such marks of true sorrow, that no one could hear or see him without being moved to compassion. "If the generous lion," said he, "pardons him who throws himself at his feet, will not a God, full of goodness, forgive the truly penitent sinner who implores His mercy?" The penitent saint received torrents of that mercy; but he, in order to deserve in some way that grace, wept and fasted, and subdued his body, and left nothing in his power undone to move the Divine Heart to compassion.

Blind and all as he was, he resolved, in imitation of many saints, to visit the shrine of St. James. But how could he do so, deprived of sight? He tried to get over this difficulty by associating himself with a youth named Datus, a tanner, like himself, and like him, too, recently

converted. They were ready to set out on their journey when an unexpected incident occurred to stop them. Datus's parents set their face against his pilgrimage, and also induced him to dissuade Francis from his intention. When the latter heard his reasons, "No," he answered; "I have made a vow, and I must fulfil it, with God's help. The Lord is the life, the truth, and the way, and will not fail whoever seeks Him: as He is the way, He will not allow me to go astray. I know I am going to suffer a great deal; but that is just what I want, for as I offended God in word and deed, it is only just that I suffer something for my sins. And so nothing can turn me from my intention." Confiding in the protection of heaven he started on his long and weary journey, groping his way. He had scarcely entered on it when some little clouds disappeared from his eyes, and his sight partially returned, so that he could move with some security. When he reached Gascony he found himself in a wood, and knew not which of two roads to take. In his difficulty he had recourse to prayer, and he instantly heard like a child's voice, which said: "The path to the right is the proper one." Raising his eyes to heaven, he blessed the Lord for this singular providence, and took the path indicated.

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### III.

What specially engaged his thoughts was his past sins and errors. Sometimes, full of holy confidence in the divine goodness, he would exclaim: "Yes, my God,

Thou wilt pardon me, and I will serve Thee with all my strength. Thou wilt pardon me, and I will give Thee complete satisfaction for my sins." At other times, disheartened at sight of his enormities, he did not dare to raise his eyes to heaven, which he had so often lost. He was one day meditating on the mercy of God, when a man, dressed like a pilgrim, came up with him. At first, pretending friendship, he offered to keep him company; then, on the pretext of their having taken the wrong road, he tried to put him astray in order to interfere with the pilgrimage. They soon entered into conversation, and the stranger made Francis tell him all his adventures and wild pranks. When he had finished, the supposed pilgrim took his hand, and exclaimed: "Oh, miserable blind man! Do you imagine that crimes so foul and abominable could be blotted out by this pilgrimage? If for one only sin God cast out the angels from heaven, and man from paradise, do you think He will pardon you so many and so great excesses? Confidence in God is all very well; but too much of it is presumption, and a kind of madness; and surely the penance of a few days cannot cure the excesses of years. Return, return, unfortunate wretch, to your own country, and pursue your former course of life, for do what you may, you cannot escape eternal damnation." When Francis heard these words he threw himself on his face to the earth, and humbly adored the Lord, and then rising, inflamed with a holy fire, he addressed these words to his mock companion: "I confess that my sins are very great and more numerous than the stars of heaven; but the mercy of God is greater still, and will delight in pardoning my crimes. Why, then, should I despair of pardon, when Jesus paid for my faults with His life? If you are an angel or a man, pray God to forgive me; if you are the enemy of my God, return to your prison in the abyss." At these words the tempter disappeared, and the pilgrim happily

pursued his journey, continually occupied with the divine praises. When he at last reached Compostella, he visited the Apostle's shrine, and received the holy Sacraments in his church with edifying modesty and recollection. God rewarded his devotion by perfectly restoring his sight. This public miracle powerfully excited confidence in the protection of St. James in those who had known him almost blind, and produced in our saint unlimited gratitude to his protector. Not knowing how to correspond to so great a favour, he spent long hours in meditation, and redoubled his penances and fasts, everything he did in praise of the divine mercies appearing to him as nothing.

When his devotion was satisfied, he undertook another pilgrimage no less painful in those times. Begging from door to door, and suffering a thousand insults and injuries, he went to Rome, where he received the benediction of Gregory IX., and a plenary indulgence. He remained in the Holy City during Lent, fasting rigorously on bread and water. Then he visited other sanctuaries in Naples, Sicily, Piedmont, &c., giving in all places a bright example of modesty, piety, and mortification, and unequivocal proofs of a sincere repentance. Where he experienced most fervour was in the sanctuary of the holy house of Loretto, in which, during a long ecstasy, the Blessed Virgin appeared to him with the Child Jesus, consoling and encouraging him to persevere in the path he had entered on. When these pilgrimages were over he returned to his native place, resolved to give complete satisfaction for the scandals of his youth:

Clothed in sackcloth, bare-footed, his head uncovered and exposed to the rays of the sun, he preached by his example penance and the contempt of all things earthly. The nights he spent in prayer, and at break of day he would go to the house of the Lord to offer his respects to the God of armies, and attend at the holy Sacrifice of

the Mass. Supported by so many graces from heaven in reward for his faithful correspondence, he loved all he had abhorred, and abhorred all he had formerly loved. Labour now became sweet to him, and he spent the greater part of the day at it. The bad smell of the undressed hides afforded him matter for serious reflection on the foulness of souls undressed by mortification; on the necessity of keeping the heart completely cleansed from the things of earth, and particularly on the importance of self-restraint. And no matter what his hand might be engaged at, he always endeavoured to accompany his labour with holy conversation, or pious considerations, or edifying hymns. Cursing horrified him, backbiting vexed him; and when he could not prevent these defects among his companions, he tried to refrain them by prayers and penances. At sunset, having finished his ordinary work, he visited the Blessed Sacrament, and then in the shades of night he would go through the streets of Sienna, crying out in a loud voice expressions like these: "Be converted to God, erring souls, be converted to God, for the Divine Mercy does not always wait." And that his words might be the more efficacious, he scourged himself severely in the places most thronged. Sometimes zeal for the divine glory filled him with invincible enthusiasm, and penetrating into taverns and gambling-houses, he would upset the tables, tear the cards, throw the dice out of the window; and wonderful to relate on such occasions, not one of the frequenters of these places ever dared to raise his hand to our saintly tanner.

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## IV.

On festival and other leisure days he visited the prisons and hospitals, everywhere giving edification, and infusing consolation into afflicted hearts. The Lord liberally repaid his heroic virtues. Among the extraordinary graces which it is related he received from heaven was the following vision :—One day, in the principal church of Sienna, after his usual exercises of piety, he appeared to fall asleep. In this sweet sleep he thought he saw the Virgin surrounded by armies of angels, and encircled with great splendour, who, turning to him, said : “ Francis, if you wish to know the life you have to lead to attain perfection, you should abandon the world : look out, then, for some solitude, and fly from the intercourse of men.” The servant of God awoke, and impelled by divine grace, went to a desert place, where he built a little hut. He lived in this solitude without other sustenance than that afforded by the herbs that grew around his dwelling, and spent the greater part of the time in prayer and penance. He was attacked by many and strong temptations : but by his diligence in obeying divine grace, he came out from all victorious.

About this time a rich gentleman of Sienna died, and amongst other bequests left five florins to every hermit in the neighbourhood. The executors, according to the directions of the will, went to Francis’s hut and asked him to take the money to pray for the deceased gentleman ; but the hermit refused, saying : “ God forbid, that having once renounced the world, its vanities, and riches, I should again involve myself in them. Take away the money, and I shall pray for the deceased all

the same." But the executors, resolved on carrying out the testator's will to the letter, left the money in the hole which gave light to the hut. There it might have been covered with cobwebs if Providence had not disposed otherwise. A poor widow went to ask alms from the servant of God to provide for a daughter, who, on account of her poverty and beauty, was exposed to imminent danger. When Francis heard her voice outside, he told her to take those gold pieces, and to recommend to God the soul of him who had left them. The hermit continued to live in his sweet solitude, but charity or obedience withdrew him somewhat from it.

The Council of Groti was celebrating a solemn feast, to which all the hermits of the district were invited. The humble Francis, enamoured of his hut, made his excuses; but in the end he had to yield to the divine will. As may be presumed, the banquet prepared for people accustomed to live on herbs was suitable for such guests. But our penitent, refusing even this slight indulgence, would not break on his usual abstinence. In the midst of the feast this gave occasion to one of the guests, out of harmony with his profession, to offer him an insult. He called him a hypocrite, a deceiver, and a humbug; he said that now in his old age, when unable to serve the world, he must put on the cloak of virtue, and give himself out as a saint. Francis listened to these injuries with profound humility, and with an angelic smile, answered him thus: "Brother, I am far worse than you said, and much worse things you might say of me, but I am sorry you should scandalise the bystanders to the detriment of your own soul." "Yes," answered the other, "we know your licentious life, and what we have to fear from a man like you." *The bystanders, astonished at the saint's humility, far from following the calumniator's example, conceived a high idea of his solid perfection. The acts of his life*

say that the Lord punished the other with acute pains, and that he owed their alleviation and cure to the charity and prayers of Francis.

When he returned to the desert the struggles and combats with the common enemy were renewed, but the saint was ever victorious. In his solitude he would bring to mind the errors of his youth ; and then, full of holy hatred of himself, would take vengeance on his body, sometimes by scourging himself till he drew blood, sometimes by throwing himself into frozen water in the depth of winter, or at others by rolling himself on thorns. The devil, ever astute and on the watch to destroy us, appeared to him on one of these occasions as a beautiful woman, and pretending to pity him, said : " What are you doing, good man ? Why do you torture yourself thus ? Do you not know that it is a serious offence against God to shorten your life in this way ? God sends me to you to take care of you, and be subject to your will in everything ; but your awfully austere life scares me." Francis had recourse to the divine aid, and the feigned lady disappeared. The fervent hermit continued to avail himself of every means to advance in Christian perfection, till the Lord willed to transplant him to another land more favoured with the dew of divine grace.

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## V.

In one of his ecstasies, the Queen of heaven appeared to him with a garland of flowers in her right hand, and in her left the habit of Mount Carmel ; and encouraging him to take it, said : " If you put on this habit as



my fervent children should, you shall have the reward of the just in heaven." Francis corresponded to the holy inspiration, and after overcoming innumerable difficulties, was admitted in 1297 among the observant children of the Virgin of Mount Carmel. As a complement to this short sketch, it is enough to say that he proved one of the most observant religious, as well in his recollection as in his zeal for the good of souls. In this secure state Francis would have considered himself happy if the recollection of his sins, and the doubt whether God had pardoned them, did not haunt him. He was frequently heard to exclaim: "Jesus, mercy! My God, pardon my iniquities!" The Lord consoled him by appearing to him crucified, and saying: "You see, Francis, how much I suffered for men, and with what ingratitude they repay me." The thought that God had died for his eternal life filled him at once with a holy confidence and a filial dread, which drew from him tears of repentance. His confessor having on one occasion refused him permission to go to communion, he could not restrain some tears, through the ardent desire he had to receive Jesus; but he bowed his head and offered the sacrifice of obedience. The Lord, however, miraculously satisfied his desires in the act of hearing Mass, by administering to him the divine manna by the hands of angels.

These extraordinary favours, the gift of prophecy and miracles, and his edifying life, gained him the veneration of all, and made his conversation listened to with edification, and received with advantage. When eighty years of age he was attacked by a violent fever. He foresaw that his last hours were come, and he prepared himself by the reception of the sacraments, and by new acts of virtue. On the third day of his illness, the 3rd of December, 1292, surrounded by religious, who bewailed his loss, he bade them adieu in these tender words: "Brethren, God be with you: and do thou, my

good Jesus, and my God, receive my spirit into thy hands." Then he was silent, and appeared to fall into an agreeable sleep—his soul had flown to the bosom of its Creator. Scarcely had the news of his death spread, when the convent was filled by people of all ages and conditions, who came to venerate the saint. His obsequies were solemn, and attended by throngs, and God glorified the tomb of His servant by working innumerable prodigies.



## THE CHRISTIAN CAPTIVE, APOSTLE OF IBERIA.

### I.

AFTER the glorious triumph of Constantine, a great number of pagans, who up to then had closed their eyes to the light of the Gospel, convinced, some of the uselessness of their ancient superstitions, others by the charity and virtuous examples of the faithful, some others by the lustre of miracles and the sanctity of the Christian doctrine, bowed their necks to the sweet yoke of the Catholic faith. Entire towns and villages destroyed their false idols, and erected temples to Jesus crucified, and the banner of the cross waved gloriously from one end to the other of the empire. Beyond its confines the faith was propagated, too, still more wonderfully. The manner in which the seed of Christianity was sowed among the Iberians is worthy of eternal record. A poor female captive was the instru-

ment of which Divine Providence availed itself. Her name is unknown, though written in indelible characters in the Book of Life. Having been taken prisoner in one of the incursions made by that barbarous people on the neighbouring states, she was carried off by them to their own country, situated on the eastern side of the Black Sea, stretching from the Caucasus to the Caspian Sea. Her sanctity of life, her purity, sobriety, modesty, and all the virtues with which she was adorned, soon attracted the attention of those infidels. On seeing her content and tranquil in the midst of her labours, on observing her contempt for all the goods of earth, her frequent fasts and assiduous prayer, they were filled with admiration, and anxious to discover the mystery involved in the matter, asked what was the meaning of her prayers and fasts. Availing herself of the opportunity of instructing those poor ignorant people, she explained to them the Christian doctrine and the greatness of Jesus Christ. Wondering more and more, especially the women, at the slave's perseverance and zeal, they imagined that religion must bring her some temporal advantage, and desired to know what that advantage might be. The holy maid undeceived them, and told them of the eternal rewards and joys with which the Lord rewards virtue in the other life; but attached, poor things, to earthly goods, they could not perceive the nobleness of the thoughts which flowed from the holy slave's mouth. But the Lord opened their eyes by confirming the captive's maxims with numerous miracles.

It was customary among those barbarians for a mother who had a child sick to carry it from door to door asking for a cure. On a certain occasion a poor woman went round all the neighbours with a child, but without success, and then took it to the saintly slave to see if she could provide a remedy. The servant of God told her she herself knew nothing of medicine, but that

her God Jesus Christ could in an instant cure all infirmities, and restore health to those despaired of. The afflicted mother entreated her to use her influence with so powerful a God. The captive consented, and taking the child she placed it on her own bed, and after a short prayer restored it to the mother completely cured. The mother was beyond herself with joy and wonder, and soon spread the news of the miracle among the people. The neighbours filled with profound respect, knew not which to admire more—the Christian's humility and disinterestedness, or the power of the God whom she adored.

When the rumour reached the queen's ears she was anxious to see the devout slave, to ask her to intercede with Jesus for the alleviation of acute pains which she had been suffering a long time. She sent an officer for the Christian; but the latter loved the humiliations of the cross rather than the glory of men, and refused to go to the palace. Then the queen made them carry her to the captive's hut. Pitying no less the queen's sufferings than the superstitions in which she was involved, the captive made her lie down on her bed, and beseeching the Lord to restore her majesty's health, to the glory of His name, and the edification of the ignorant, she obtained from Him the queen's complete restoration. The humble Christian, rejoicing at the grace conferred, and attributing the glory of the prodigy to the mere benignity of Jesus, instructed the queen in the dogmas of our holy religion. She explained to her according to her capacity, and the knowledge with which the Lord inspired her, not only that Jesus, Son of the Eternal Father, was the Creator and Governor of the Universe, but also that it was He who gave and took away sceptres, and sent prosperity and calamities on earth for the good of men. She told her that it was He who had cured her of her pains, but that there were other much more terrible torments to fear, and another

much sweeter health and life to hope for. And after explaining the eternal punishments of hell, and the ineffable joys of heaven, she bade her good-bye, and encouraged her to embrace the cross of Christianity, the only way to escape eternal perdition, and securely reach the land of the just.

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## II.

When the queen returned to the palace, full of joy, the king asked her how she had been cured so quickly. She told him what had occurred, and it astonished all who heard it; and the king suggested to her that in gratitude she should send some presents to the captive. "Sire," said the queen, "that woman cares nothing for the goods of the world—she despises gold and silver. Fasting is her sustenance, and she has no other ambition than to make her God known. Consequently the only recompense we can make agreeable to her is to adore Jesus Christ, her God, by whose virtue she has cured me." The king was deaf to his wife's insinuations, and put the matter off; and though she often returned to the charge, and showed herself ardently attached to Christianity, she could never obtain a definite answer from her husband. In the meantime, the saintly captive, through her zeal and holy conversation was gaining ground in the minds of the barbarians, who were edified by her charity and sweetness. Good example has ever been a mute but eloquent and efficacious sermon to make erring souls enter into themselves, and bring them insensibly to Jesus Christ, our Divine Model. What effect must *not have* been produced in the breasts of that barbarous

people when they saw a poor woman, who, far from going out to backbite with the neighbours, and by idle talk create discord in families, far from seeking her own advantage, was always occupied at her work, or engaged in prayer, was always disposed to be an angel of peace between those at enmity, and hesitated not to sacrifice her repose for the consolation and health of her very oppressors? She was succeeding in making proselytes for Jesus; but her ardent heart desired more, and she ceased not day or night to ask God for the conversion of all that people. And the Lord accepted her tears and her prayers.

Bacurio, the king, went out one day to the chase with the people belonging to the palace. In the middle of the sport, when involved in the midst of the woods, a dense darkness came on in full day, and buried them in obscurity. They separated and took different roads, and the king was left alone, without knowing whither to go or what to do. He called to his companions, but a distant echo alone responded, increasing his confusion still more. In these straits he bethought him of the God of the captive, and the wonders his wife told of Him. He appealed to Him, and promised in his heart to become a Christian, and to destroy the impotent idols if Jesus should free him from his present difficulties. He had scarcely made these vows mentally, without uttering a word, when the darkness suddenly disappeared. When he reached home safely he told his wife what Jesus Christ had done for him, and ordered the Christian captive to be immediately brought to him to instruct him in the religion of the Omnipotent God.

The zealous missionary presents herself, teaches him the principal articles of our faith, instructs him in the ceremonies, and the way to pray, and induces him to build a temple to Jesus Christ, in which the faithful may meet. The king, anxious to make his subjects participators in his own happiness, collects them together, and

recounting to them, one by one, the miracles performed by the captive's God, exhorts them to embrace Christianity. An enthusiastic shout is raised by the audience, and all burst into praises of Jesus Christ, the God of the Christian woman. The triumph of the poor captive was complete. With the loss of her own liberty she had freed a whole people from the captivity of the devil, and had given them the liberty of the children of God. It was at once determined to proceed with the erection of the temple, of which the captive gave them a plan, and she presided over the works, edifying all by her heroic virtues. Her activity kept pace with her charity and modesty: she attended to all and to everything, she encouraged all, she instructed and edified all. The walls were completed, and two beautiful columns erected, when the devil, maddened at his defeat by a poor captive, determined to try his fortune and recover what was lost. He distorted the third column, and do what they might with all their machines and implements, they could not bring it back to its level. As usually happens with beginners and neophytes, discouragement began to set in, to the danger of the whole edifice being abandoned. Our heroine alone appeared to gain new strength in face of these difficulties.

Acquainted with the schemes of the enemy, she had recourse to the most powerful machine she knew—prayer and fasting. Shut up inside the walls of the church they were building, she passed the whole night in prayer to baffle the tricks of hell. The king returned in the morning with the workmen, perplexed and undecided; but they were astonished to see the column, which they were unable to level, suspended in the air, and ready to be placed on its pedestal. The whole people, witnesses of the prodigy, burst into praises of Jesus Christ, and proclaimed aloud that that must be the true faith, in confirmation of which such wonders were wrought. Their admiration culminated when the column descended

on its base, and was perfectly levelled. Thus did the saint triumph over the wiles of Satan, increasing God's glory when the devil thought to bring dishonour on the missionary. At last she had the consolation of seeing the church completed, and an immense concourse prostrated in it before the sign of Redemption. Soon after the Emperor Constantine received an embassy which came to ask for priests, from which he derived more consolation than from all his conquests. They were the ambassadors of our prince sent at the captive's request, that the work so happily begun might be perfected. Constantine granted their request, dismissing the envoys with signal marks of esteem and benevolence, and sending bishops and priests to care the vineyard planted with the sweat and tears of a poor Christian slave.

Rufinus, who relates the story, and from whom Socrates, Sozomene, and Theodoret took it, says that he himself heard it in Jerusalem from the lips of Bacurio, who from king of that nation became General of the Roman troops in Palestine, under the Emperor Theodosius. The Roman Martyrologium makes mention of this illustrious woman on the 15th of December. What confusion she will cause on the day of judgment to many Christians, who would not put one foot past the other to promote the divine glory! We can all in our sphere be apostles, at least by prayer and good example.

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## ST. GUIBORATA, PRIEST'S HOUSEKEEPER.

## I.

THE parents of this illustrious virgin lived in Suavia, in Germany, and there Guiborata was born, and was educated in a Christian manner. From her tenderest years she gave clear signs of the appreciation in which she should hold innocence, prayer, and retirement; for even then she was remarkable for her discretion and recollection, and might serve as a model to grown-up girls.-Caring little for play and diversions, she was never found in them except through motives of charity and Christian condescendence. Her greatest happiness was to get into some corner of the church to attend at the Divine Offices, or engage in prayer. Influenced by this spirit, she found sweet consolation in everything that breathed of piety. Even at eleven years of age, guided by her premature discretion, though the chapel was two miles from her house, she never lost Holy Mass. Acting on the proverb: "God helps the early riser," she got up very early and went to the church, often barefooted. When her devotions were ended she returned home to engage with equal care on whatever her parents ordered her. However, she availed herself of every moment she could to shut herself up in her room, and piously engage in prayer, or in reading good books. St. Ambrose calls retirement the school of modesty, and as the saint was an ardent lover of virginal candour, she left not that school except through necessity or piety.

Through this sincere piety Guiborata was the most tender and affectionate child to her Christian parents, and showed them every respect in her power. In their old age they were attended indeed, by all their daughters,

who thus repaid them for the Christian care they took of their education, but our saint was remarkable above all for the diligence and tenderness with which she tended and nursed them when sick. When, like most old people, they were importunate, and hard to please, she regarded them as two pledges which Jesus had commended to her, and either bore their ill-humour in silence and resignation, or answered them as amiably and mildly as she could. In this way she calmed them down, and contented them in their sufferings. In return the good old couple, seeing the source from which so much good flowed to them, did not unnecessarily disturb the voluntary retirement of their beloved daughter, and respecting her virginal aspirations, never even insinuated marriage to her. They had, perhaps, some hope that her brother, who was studying for the priesthood, might take her as housekeeper, and be a protection to her. And so it happened.

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## II.

When her brother was ordained, Guiborata went to live with him. Placed in these new circumstances, she gave loose rein to her pure aspirations, and employed her time, partly in the duties of the house, which she kept scrupulously clean, partly in the exercises of piety and mortification, and partly in the decoration of the temple of the Most High. As regards the adornment of the altar, it could not be said of her, as of others, unfortunately, that she bestowed more care on her own house than on that of God. In her own house everything was decent certainly, but in the church she em-

ployed all her ingenuity to make it worthy of the purposes for which it was intended. In the regulation of her house she was assiduous, diligent, and so economical, that without failing in anything which the decency of her brother's position demanded, she was able to save something for the poor of Jesus Christ. So pleasing was her conduct to the parishioners and her brother, that the latter resolved to hand over to her the administration of his income, that she might be the better able to attend to the wants of the poor, who found in her a compassionate mother. With what joy she accepted duties so conformable to her charitable inclinations it is easier to imagine than describe. What is certain is, that the priest's house soon became the natural asylum of the needy and the afflicted. Participating in his sister's noble sentiments, and taking part in her good work, like a zealous pastor, her brother went in search of the stray sheep, of neglected orphans, and other needy persons, and handed them over to Guiborata's pious attentions. And she looked after them with maternal tenderness; opening the doors of her heart to their tears and their wants, and carefully binding up all their wounds, so that being unable to attend to her brother and her poor, she had to hire two servants to help her in the work. Thus did she pass day after day, a perfect model of charitable housekeepers; and in the meantime she laboured to adorn her soul with all kinds of virtue. Separated from the commerce of the world, she could only be seen on domestic or charitable business. She was so rigid in her dealings with herself, that she never tasted meat or wine; and though there were sometimes nice dishes on her table, her mortification and charity taught her to deny herself, that she might be able to divide with the poor. Her bed was hard boards; and when all were asleep, then the saint got up to pass the night in prayer. The flame thus enkindled was not allowed to remain inactive. Zealous for the good of

souls, she encouraged all, and particularly her servants, to practise the exercise of piety and mortification; and she could have desired to communicate to the whole world the fire which burned in her own breast.

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### III.

One of her own servants gave her a great deal of annoyance by some false accusations, but Guiborata asked Jesus to pardon the detractor, and tranquilly pursued her holy method of life, to the edification of all the faithful and her brother's great joy. Indescribable is the peace which those two hearts enjoyed, united by the double bond of blood and religion, the example of one being a stimulus to the other to advance in the path of perfection. Like many saints of their time, they conceived the idea of visiting the shrines of the apostles, and went to Rome. During their journey and stay in the Eternal City, the fervent and saintly housekeeper redoubled her austerities and works of mercy, and sometimes deprived herself of necessities to be able to distribute more abundant alms among the poor. Considering this generosity and fervour, it is difficult to form an idea of the graces and favours which the Lord probably granted her in this pilgrimage. Undoubtedly she would be encouraged to ardently persevere in the path she had entered on, though it were necessary to shed her blood like the apostles, and give her life in defence of the faith. If brother and sister had left

home full of ardour, with much greater fervour did they return to renew their interrupted labours. After a time, however, anxious to abandon the world more completely, the priest resolved to become a monk in the abbey of St. Gall. Great was the love they had for each other, strong the ties which bound those two hearts: but God so willed it, and one and the other made a prompt sacrifice of all they loved most dearly in the world, and separated in obedience to the will of the Most High. But Guiborata did not, therefore, interrupt her former method of life, but rather, on finding herself free from the attendance she owed her brother, she dedicated herself more earnestly to piety and the succour of the poor. This system of active, and at the same time, contemplative life was very pleasing to her, and she acquired great merits by persevering in it sometimes; but going on an occasion, on the prelate's invitation, to visit her brother at the abbey, she was so enamoured of the devout solitude, that she determined to take up her residence in the neighbourhood. She did so, and spent many years in a hermitage, occupied in daily exercises of devotion and penance. Separated completely from commerce with the world, shut up in that silent solitude, the school of so many great saints, she received such consolations from the Divine Spirit in the contemplation of the holy mysteries, that she passed whole days without thinking of food.

Soon the aroma of her sanctity was diffused through the neighbouring villages, and crowds came to admire her example and profit by her saintly maxims. Edified by her extreme poverty, and unable to suffer her to be surrounded by so many privations, they succoured her with abundant offerings; but as her fasts were long and her needs few, she gave all, according to her former custom, for the relief of the poor. But she longed for greater retirement, and asked the bishop of Constance to assign her another cell near St. Gall; and having obtained

her wish, she shut herself up never to come out again, or be seen by anyone, like the recluses of old. Holy and pure, and apparently above human reach, was the life she led, and she thereby merited extraordinary gifts and favours from heaven. Her miracles and prophecies soon shed lustre on those solitudes, and if in her former cell she was disturbed in her contemplations by the devout persons who visited her, in this, though more retired, she had to suffer more, for people of all ranks approached her to have their doubts solved, and to recommend themselves to her prayers. Among the persons of noble rank who came to her was one Riquilda, a rich young lady, but sickly, and despaired of by the doctors. The saint received her with pleasure, encouraged her, and, by dint of supplications, obtained her complete cure from the Lord. Grateful for her restoration to health, and edified by Guiborata's charity, she would not leave her benefactor's side, but remained there to imitate her example.

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#### IV.

In the eleventh century, in which our heroine lived, the Huns threatened to invade the country, and reduce all by fire and sword. Solicitous for our saint's life, and fearing she might fall a victim to the cruel invaders, the abbot of St. Gall asked her to retire to another safer place belonging to the abbey, where she

should run less risk; but Guiborata, convinced on the one hand that this would not save her, and on the other, anxious to give her life for Jesus Christ, thanked the abbot for his kindness, but resolved not to move from the spot which she believed heaven had destined for her. Believing that no place was secure or less exposed to the cruelty of the barbarians, neither did she yield to the entreaties of Riquilda's parents, who came in search of their daughter. The day of the invasion came; the barbarians entered the abbey, and sacked it, burning the convent, and murdering all the monks they found. Thirsting for blood, they spared not one life, nor respected a single village. What they did not destroy with the sword, they consumed with fire. In such a fearful slaughter it was hard for Guiborata's hut to escape; and so her turn came. Thither run the sacrilegious assassins; they examine the cell, and after stripping her of her clothes, they, in rage at not finding anything to satisfy their avarice, give her three blows of an axe on the head. She fell on her knees, and prayed for the persecuted Church and for her executioners. Guiborata sank to the ground, and slowly gave up her soul to her Creator. Her life, so full of good works, in spite of her austerities and penances, lasted nearly a century. Riquilda, whom the storm had frightened away like a tender dove, lived yet twenty years afterwards in that same solitude, perfecting her virtues by patience in the midst of continual sickness, till the Lord called her to Himself.

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## VENERABLE ALBINA, DRESSMAKER.

## I.

ALBINA was born in Rome on the evening of the 28th of March, 1807, and was baptised three days after, receiving the names Albina Maria Louisa. The day was Holy Saturday, when the houses in Rome are blessed in memory of the exterminating angel having spared the first-born of Israel. By coincidence it happened that the priest was blessing her house when Albina was born, which made him exclaim : "This is an angel of benediction." This was a pleasing presage, which she never forgot after hearing it a few times from her mother's lips. Her parents, Francesco Luigi di Urbino and Teresa degli Angeli, of Roman birth, were not certainly rich, but by their labour they could have decently reared their daughters, Mary and Albina. But God, in His inscrutable designs, prepared for our heroine a life of sacrifice and penalties. The first misfortune which befell her was the death of her father, the sole support of the house, whom she lost in October of that same year. Her mother must have felt this unexpected blow very much. The friends of the family went to mingle their tears with those of the disconsolate widow, who was shocked on hearing some of them blame Divine Providence for taking the man who was useful in the house, and leaving a helpless family behind. What madness and injustice ! To dare to correct the wise Lord of the universe ! Without this apparent misfortune, it is more than probable that Albina would never have reached the great virtue which we admire in her.

The good Teresa, despising such low and impious



ideas, found a sweet balsam for her wounds in the Christian maxims. She raised her eyes and her heart to heaven, and, full of faith and resignation, offered to the Lord her costly sacrifice, which was not the less agreeable to the Father of Mercies because accompanied by lively grief. She was persuaded that the providence of God outlives all deaths and disasters, and that it is an injury to Him to put our whole confidence in human industry without looking for the prosperous issue to Him who regulates all for our benefit. "Cursed is the man," says the Scripture, "who places all his confidence in man." Supported by these life-giving principles, the poor widow prepared herself to suffer all the effects of her sad loss. To such extreme misery was she reduced, that unable to attend to the education of her children with the fruits of her labour, she was compelled to sell her spare furniture. It is true that her elder daughter soon came to her assistance by sewing in a dressmaker's establishment; but what could a child earn between six and ten years of age? She consequently had enough of pains and bitterness, whose chalice she had to drain to the dregs one day after another for a long time.

And so the tender Albina was growing up in the shadow of poverty. Obedient and submissive she suffered without complaint all her inconveniences and privations, as a prelude of the peace and resignation which were afterwards to afford us such a brilliant example. Twelve years they spent in these straits, and then, their furniture all sold, their resources exhausted, and the earning of mother and daughter being insufficient for their wants, they were compelled to adopt some other mode of life. The elder daughter then got married, and took Albina to live with her, while her mother went to service in the house of an illustrious family named de Capranica. Needless to say what it cost Teresa to go to service, and separate from her

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beloved daughter; but she saw in Jesus examples of greater humility, and prudently realised that it is preferable and more laudable to adopt any decent occupation - whatever, no matter how low, than to appeal to occult mendicity. On the other hand, the noble family of Capranica so tried to sweeten Teresa's lot, that only with great violence could she tear herself away from them later on.

In the meantime, Albina, by Mary's side, grew up like a fresh flower, watered by the perennial streams of grace. As she was of a lively and ardent temperament, she was very susceptible of love and anger; but armed with mortification from her juvenile years, she learned how to avail herself of these two powerful passions to advance in virtue. Hence no disordered movements were ever noticed in her, and the vivacity of her disposition was ever accompanied by such peace and sweetness, that she captivated all hearts. She was early instructed in the catechism, whose maxims led her to the path of perfection before she knew what it was. But though her discernment was precocious and great the lights which God gave her, yet she needed a good guide, and the Lord provided one for her. Unfortunate the man who would direct himself in the path of life! Blind reason will try to guide the will contaminated by self-love, which hides from us our true good; and if the blind lead the blind, as Jesus says, both will fall into the ditch. Our Albina, often taken to confession by her mother to the church of St. Mary del Popolo, had as confessor an Augustinian friar, who was the priest of the church. But this good man, engaged in business of importance, could not bestow sufficient care on the cultivation of her soul; and so God sent her to another. There was another confessor of the order of St. Augustine in the same church, a man of consummate virtue, penitent, zealous, and given to prayer and retirement, named Father Poggiarelli. To the care of this prudent

director the Lord confided the girl's sanctification. In the absence of the parish priest Albina went to confession to Father Poggiarelli, and pleased with the advice he gave her, continued with him afterwards. She was then fourteen years of age. The man of God, discovering at once the treasures of grace hid in that innocent soul, said to her, in accents which went to her tender heart : " My daughter, I want you to be a saint, and a great saint." These sweet words ever resounded in Albina's bosom, and served her as an agreeable stimulus to aim at perfection. The servant of God commenced her new life with a general confession, accompanied by bitter tears for her past defects, and with edifying resolutions of seeking in future only to please God ; not because she had any doubts about her previous confessions, or because before this day, called by her the day of her conversion, she did not lead an irreproachable life, but the better to secure sorrow for her faults, and to reanimate her fervour for greater things. Thenceforth she was only found at work by her sister's side, or at prayer in the church. Dances, fashions, walks, and other diversions, which so much please incautious youths, were in Albina's eyes vanities unworthy of sensible people. Hence she looked with eyes of compassion on girls who pursued worldly pleasures, and prayed fervently for them. She attended to the poor with such tenderness, that when one of them came to her door she hastened to her mother or sister to ask an alms for him, and she suffered great pain when she had to send them away without help. " God console you, brother," she would say, with Christian sweetness, " we have nothing for you to-day !"

As to obedience and submission to her elders, she was so far from failing in the slightest degree in them, that according to her mother's testimony, she would try to divine their wishes in order to carry them out before she was told. What a pity that the retirement of her life

deprives us of the perfume of her juvenile virtues! We only know in particular, that at twelve or thirteen years of age she made her First Communion, with angelic modesty and fervour. As the favours which the Lord pours out on well-disposed hearts, when for the first time He enters sacramentally into them, are so great, it is lamentable that some people, on pretext of reverence for the Divine Bread, will put off children's communion till sin has taken possession of their souls, or the love of mundane pleasures makes the celestial Manna insipid to them! Justly did Blessed Mary of the Incarnation exclaim: "Oh! how important it is to go to communion with a pure heart the first time; Jesus then gives to the soul a special protection, and preserves it from great falls during life." Albina had the happiness to receive her good Jesus with a heart stainless and animated by singular recollection and fervour. From those early years she sought retired chapels, and concealed herself from the view of the faithful when receiving, that she might, when by herself, the better pour out her affection for her Divine Guest. But in vain will you try to hide all the rays of a powerful light. All Albina's neighbours proclaimed that she had a seraph's heart.

The pious maid continued by her sister's side, perfecting herself in sewing, and displaying her aptitude for the trade to which, in spite of her natural repugnance, her mother had put her. It was only through obedience she tried to distinguish herself in it, and such was the proficiency she made, that she had only to look at any new fashion to be able to cut it out with great elegance. The good widow was hoping that the success of her two daughters would enable her to leave service; but when she least expected it, the elder's death buried her in a sea of bitterness, and clipped the wings of her heart. Mary died in confinement when only eighteen years of age, and Albina was obliged to go to her mother to the house of

Capranica. She deeply felt the death of her sister, not on her own account, but on her mother's, whom she saw so afflicted, and for whom she could not do all that her filial love dictated. But she was not dismayed, for her affection inspired her with new ideas and new projects, and gave her various hopes of being able to aid her mother. She thought so much and prayed so much, that at last, after mature deliberation, and with her spiritual father's benediction, she resolved to open a dress-maker's shop. She went to Teresa one day and told her she intended to take her from service, and rent a house in which she could earn a living by her industry. The widow was surprised, and pointing out to her all the difficulties she should have to meet with, told her she thought it was rashness to do such a thing. Albina answered that she had her director's permission, and that she hoped God would bless her good intentions. *Come, mother, come; have no fear, for God is with us! let us go on and trust in Him, and He will not fail us.* Albina so knew how to gain over her mother, that in spite of the opposition of the family in which they lived, and who had been so kind to them, and in spite of the disapprobation of all who wished them well, Teresa at last agreed to her plans, and they took a house for their business. The Lord blessed them, for in a short time the two were unable to meet the demands of their customers, and they had to engage some helpers and apprentices to assist them.

But let no one imagine that by this they escaped poverty: they only aspired to earn what would keep them and clothe them decently. And in this position, so little conformable to her love of retirement, and exposed to dissipation and vanity, Albina led a truly religious life. Rigorous silence, continual penance, a spirit of incessant prayer, uninterrupted union with God, joined to an edifying sweetness, affability, and charity, were the virtues which shone in her from the beginning, and

which, far from withering in the course of time, grew stronger day by day. Notwithstanding this, the assiduous labour the whole day, and sometimes the whole night to satisfy vain whims, the intercourse required to comprehend them, and the continual danger of allowing herself to be overcome by envy or pride, made her long for the solitude of the cloister. But what about her mother? How could she leave her alone, without anyone to look after her? It is true that in case children are not necessary for the support of their parents, if the latter give unreasonable opposition, the former should pay no attention to their lamentations, but as St. Jerome says, should walk over their bodies in order to take refuge in religion, like St. Louis, St. Stanislaus, the widow de Chantel, and others; but Albina was not in these circumstances, and to escape from hesitation and doubt she consulted her director. He heard her patiently, examined her reasons, recommended her to the Lord, and ordered her to abandon the idea of becoming a nun, and to think of nothing but the care of her old mother, and of her own sanctification in the world. The servant of God obeyed; but, despite her resignation, the Lord did not extinguish in her this thirst for retirement, that the merit of the sacrifice might be enhanced. Often when speaking of the matter she would raise her eyes to heaven, heave a sigh, and say in profound conformity: "It is the will of God!" This sacrifice, which lasted till her death, made her a precious victim of obedience and charity, for it was only the voice of her director and love for her mother could keep her in the world.

And God rewarded her for it, for under the direction of the good father, she advanced with sure step in the path of virtue; on which account she gratefully venerated him as an angel of God, as a guide sent her by heaven, as a faithful pilot who was directing her to the port of perfection. Perhaps without having read it, she

complied with the advice of that great director of souls, St. Francis de Sales, who says: "A good director should be to you an angel. . . . As soon as you find him you should not look on him as a simple mortal; but put complete confidence in him, mingled with a holy respect, so that your respect may not diminish your confidence, nor your confidence interfere with your respect. Trust in him with the veneration of a daughter for a father, and venerate him with the confidence of a daughter in her mother. In fine, this affection should be strong and fervent, entirely holy, entirely sacred, all spiritual and all divine." This did Albina practise with the directors of her soul.

One day Father Poggiarelli was passing through the street where the dressmaker lived, and called at the door. She answered the knock, and the Father told her he felt ill, and came to bid her good-bye for ever. The servant of God retired deeply afflicted, and with eyes bathed in tears told her mother the bad news. And the fact was that Father Poggiarelli felt death approaching, and that was the last time he saw his spiritual daughter on earth. He had previously given her a prayer for the dying addressed to the glorious St. Joseph, and charged her at the same time to say it for him when she heard he was in his agony. One night, without knowing the critical state of the sick father, she got up to say the prayer. At daybreak the following morning she ran to the convent; her heart was wildly palpitating, the pre-sage of some misfortune; she asked for the patient, and they told her he had expired about midnight, and that was the very hour she had prayed for him. The poor orphan bewailed with bitter tears the loss of so beloved a father; but it was God's will, and she submitted to it, without, however, forgetting his good counsels. With pleasure and gratitude she received some prints and instruments of penance which he had left her in his will; and such legacies from God's servants are much more

valuable certainly than diamonds and jewels. Albina read in them her director's virtues, and at sight of them she was encouraged to conquer the difficulties of the spiritual life.

And here was a new trouble for our pious dressmaker. To whom will she confide the direction of her soul? Whom can she blindly obey as she did her deceased confessor? The election of a spiritual father is one of the most important matters in the life of the soul: a bad guide may bring on us eternal ruin. Hence St. Francis de Sales justly says: "Earnestly pray God to send you a master according to His heart: pray with confidence that as He sent an angel to Tobias, He may grant you also a good and faithful guide." Much did the desolate servant of God pray, and the Lord by means of a good religious sent her to Father John Baptist, then procurator and afterwards vicar-general of the Augustinians. Kneeling at his feet, she said, with all the candour and affection of a daughter: "Father, I place my soul in your hands, like a child in the arms of its nurse." And he, with the love of a true father, received her and had her under his direction till he left her in the haven of security. St. Francis says: "When you have found a good director, bless the Divine Majesty, think not of looking for another, and obey him with simplicity, humility, and confidence."

Her new confessor not only confirmed the method of life approved of by Father Poggiarelli, but also his opinion about her vocation. And so, abandoning all hope of becoming a nun, she resolved to dedicate herself in the world to the service of Jesus, her beloved Spouse, and bind herself to Him as closely as possible. With this object she put on the habit of the Third Order of St. Francis on the 9th of October, 1837, and on the same day of the year following she made her profession with inexplicable satisfaction. Her ardent desire to become a nun made her embrace with unequalled ardour



whatever in the world resembled the cloister. Holy poverty, called mother and sister by the seraphic St. Francis, humility and obedience, for which that saint was so conspicuous, took complete possession of Albina's heart. Hence that filial confidence which she ever had in the saint of Assisium, and her ardent desire to observe his rules. Unless prevented by some imprescindible business of great importance, she missed no Sunday of congregation, and always attended with exemplary modesty and zeal.

Animated with unyielding faith, she declared war on all defects, and never flagged in her difficult resolution. With the incessant mortification of her inclination to anger and immoderate tenderness, she converted these two passions from tyrants into powerful coadjutors of her noble resolutions. She abhorred not only the appearance of sin, no matter how light, but also imperfections, and even the lawful satisfaction of her senses, which charity or necessity did not demand. To rise to this high degree of perfection, she called to her aid the powerful arms of prayer and penance. She not only never neglected her morning and night prayers, but lost not a single moment she could employ in meditation. She was engaged in it from early morning up to the hour of work; in it she spent a great part of the night. And sometimes the whole night; she employed in it all the time she could subtract from her ordinary occupations. Every day she heard holy Mass, and sometimes two or more; she visited the Blessed Sacrament, and said the Rosary to the Queen of Heaven. But on festival days she doubled her prayers. Besides the time she spent in meditating in the church in the morning, and other times of prayer and reading during the day, she went in the evening to the church of Jesus and Mary, where our Lord is perpetually exposed, and passed two hours in meditation. Kneeling with her head bent and her face covered with her hands, she re-

mained thus, in winter as in summer, motionless as a statue, inspiring all who saw her with devotion. She sometimes came away with her eyes swollen with weeping: this, indeed, occurred frequently, for it was enough for her to look on Jesus crucified to feel melted with love and moved to tender tears. These consolations, however, were not seldom succeeded by desolations, aridity, and great interior pains, with which the Lord purified her. She never came away empty from meditation. Of the thoughts and affections which impressed her most forcibly, she formed either spiritual garlands, which served as matter for frequent ejaculations, or maxims and resolutions, which she sometimes wrote down that their perusal might renew her salutary affections. We will quote some of them. On the back of a print of St. Nicholas de Tolentino she had written the following resolutions: "To conquer pride with humility and meekness. To be patient and resigned in everything to the will of God. Obedience to superiors. To humble myself whenever I fall." On another paper were the following thoughts: "Ever . . . never . . . eternity. . . . A God who sees me . . . a moment which escapes me . . . an eternity which awaits me. . . . To set great value on time, which flies away and returns not. . . . Every hour I draw nearer to death and the terrible judgment of God. Unfortunate shall I be if I do not employ well the time which remains to me, a time which the mercy of God gives me to repair in some way what I squandered miserably in abominable iniquities." Her humility made her look on herself as very wicked.

She also learned how to keep alive in her breast the flame of divine love by ingenious artifices. In the beginning of her fervour, in order to habituate herself to frequent communication with Jesus, she tied a black thread in the shape of a ring on her little finger, that the sight of it might remind her to raise her heart to

God. Another of her devices was to have an image of the infant Jesus in her work-box to inflame her love for her Divine Spouse. Sometimes she was so absorbed in these affections that it was necessary to shake her to make her rouse herself; and then, in confusion, she would excuse herself for her distraction. From this union with God sprung a profound humility, which served as a wall against temptations. It is a singular fact that, though often exposed to the attacks of the enemy against hope and chastity, she never was tempted against faith. Without the slightest hesitation she believed with simplicity and firmness the most profound mysteries, and manifested a reverent respect for sacred things and persons. Her veneration for the ministers of the Lord was very great, and no one dared in her presence to speak slightly of priests, without being immediately pulled up by her. Another fruit of her faith was the exact fulfilment of the commandments of the Church. How can one believe that Jesus gave the Supreme Pontiff the power of legislating, and yet despise as trifles the observance of feasts, the keeping of the fast, and other commandments? As regards festival days, Albina was so scrupulous that she did not permit the slightest work in her house that was not absolutely necessary. When it happened that the shop could not be cleaned on Saturday, and the servant went to do it on Sunday, "No," the servant of God would say, "no, my child; to-day it is not required, and to-morrow one of the apprentices will sweep it."

From her faith Albina also drew an unlimited confidence in the mercy of God. To be disturbed, depressed, or disheartened at some falls, the fruit of our miserable condition, is always the effect of pride. Albina, though filled with the holy fear of God, never yielded to cowardice when she fell into any defect; on the contrary, full of filial confidence and profound humility, she quickly arose and sought to remedy it. She knew from

experience that the greatest obstacle of virtue is not in committing slight faults, but in making peace with them. When she was tempted against hope, she had recourse to the merits of Jesus Christ. "Oh, yes!" she would exclaim, "I will fly to my Saviour's wounds. Ah! when He died for me, why should I not hope?" And thus in all her necessities she rested tranquilly in the arms of Providence, let those anxieties be spiritual or temporal. She never fretted about the morrow. When this subject turned up, she quoted, as a rule of conduct familiar to her, the maxim of Jesus Christ, in which He tells us not to be solicitous about what may happen us; and she used to fervently repeat: "Confidence in God! confidence in God!"

The love of God which burned in her breast was in keeping with her faith and hope. Such was the fire which burned in her that when talking about pious things her face would become inflamed, and she would burst into loving affections. This ardour was peculiarly manifest when she was before her beloved Jesus, hidden in the august Sacrament. In this adorable Victim centred all her delights, and no hours were so happy as those she spent after receiving the Holy Eucharist, or before the Blessed Sacrament when exposed in some church. She never despised these moments, and when she went out on her ordinary business, and found a church open, she would go in and pay her respects to her Divine Spouse. There she experienced the truth of David's saying, that a day passed in God's tabernacle is worth a thousand years spent in worldly pleasures. With what care and fervour would one thus burning in love of Jesus prepare herself for receiving Him in the Holy Eucharist!

By her confessor's orders she approached the holy tribunal of Penance at least once a week. As she had an enviable clearness of conscience, and expressed herself with exactness and precision, her reconciliations

were ordinarily short. Not a moment did she lose in useless and puerile explanations, nor in stories with which some souls torment their confessor and involve themselves in a labyrinth of perplexities and scruples. Obedient and submissive to the slightest insinuation of her spiritual father, she left the divine tribunal full of peace. As soon as she thought herself properly prepared, she went to the confessional without anxiety or fear, as if she were prostrate at the foot of the cross on Calvary, and sprinkled with the blood of Jesus crucified. And there the love of God drew from her tears and sighs, as if she were another Magdalen, though she scarcely had matter enough for absolution. What effects the divine food would produce in one endowed with these dispositions! Though sometimes the Divine Spouse tried her with dryness and aridity, yet there He communicated to her that courage, fortitude, and constancy which characterised all her works. For a loving soul like Albina's, which regards itself as exiled in this world, there can be no greater consolation, even in the midst of spiritual desolation, than to be in Jesus' presence and lay before Him all its necessities. Hence she anxiously sought Him. Even when they carried the Viaticum to some sick person, she usually accompanied her beloved Jesus, and treated with Him about the sick person's salvation. But her love was most inflamed in the Holy Mass, "the Sun of spiritual exercises," as St. Francis de Sales calls it, "the centre of the Christian religion, the marrow of devotion, the soul of piety, the ineffable mystery, containing in itself the abyss of divine charity." Such was her anxiety to attend this unbloody sacrifice, that nor rain, nor cold, nor storm could keep her from it. There, meditating on the different steps of the passion and death of our Saviour, and reflecting on the sacred ceremonies, she melted into sweet tears of love.

But these were not the only sources from which she

drew the love of God. The consideration of the mysteries of the Child Jesus was an inexhaustible vein. On this account she not only offered a novena to Him every month, and fasted in His honour the 25th of each month, but in imitation of her father, St. Francis, every Christmas she prepared a crib in her house, and meditated on the mystery of His birth. There Albina became more attached to poverty, silence, humility, modesty, and the virtues of which Jesus gives us so bright an example when reclining in the manger. In view of the tender devotion of the fervent dressmaker, it is unnecessary to say that she loved the Blessed Virgin like a daughter. Besides making in her honour a daily visit to her, and saying the Rosary, and reciting the Little Office every Sunday, she prepared herself with special prayers for her principal feasts, and fasted on their eves. She had also a special devotion for several saints. Among them were St. Joseph, St. Louis Gonzaga, and St. Francis of Assisium, whom she tenderly called her father. On a certain occasion she was alone with a female friend in a room in which there was a picture of the holy patriarch. In the middle of the conversation she fixed her gaze on it and became absorbed; then her burning eyes shed some tears, and forgetting that her friend was present, she exclaimed, in a trance of love: "Oh, my father!" . . . And, indeed, her virtues proved her a faithful daughter of St. Francis.

As such she was extremely humble, amiable, condescending, and full of meekness; she took delight in insults and humiliations, and felt that she was regarded as something. When she received any praise, she would blush for shame and say: "Oh! if you knew me well you would not think so." If necessity did not demand it, she never spoke of herself either well or ill, and avoided even expressions of self-depreciation, regarding them as stumbling-blocks to true humility, and disguise put on by self-love to court praise. Vainglory disgust

her. From the commencement of her perfect life she resolved never to do anything through human respect, nor desist from anything from the same motive, but to be directed in all things by the lights of faith, reason, or obedience. Guided by this resolution in all her prayers and actions, she always acted from supernatural motives, never from thoughtlessness or curiosity, and much less from feminine vanity. Charity was the rule of her conversation, and hence she took great care never to utter idle words. What pleasure could worldly delights afford a soul thus given to God? If to the wearing labours of her business by day and night we add the servant of God's weak constitution, we may form an approximate idea of how mortified her life was. But she was not content with this only. Though her ingenious humility endeavoured to hide it, it is known that she was a martyr of penance. Besides taking disciplines and wearing hair-cloth, she would never allow herself the slightest satisfaction. She fasted strictly every Friday and Saturday, and on other days she ate so frugally that they might be called fast days, too. If her mother and confessor had not controlled her spirit of penance, she would have rivalled the most austere anchorets. Her sleep was of the shortest, and it is probable she passed whole nights in prayer without being drowsy the following day either at home or in the church, as happens to most people in like circumstances.

By these means she preserved her virginity stainless. If her director had allowed her, she would from her early years have made a vow of perpetual chastity; but she had to content herself with making it for a given time, renewing it three times annually, till a few years before her death she obtained from her spiritual father the favour she so long desired. From love of this virtue she could not even hear marriage mentioned. She could have made several advantageous matches, but she rejected them all, and showed how displeasing such offers

were to one betrothed to her loving Jesus. She spared no pains in the cultivation of this glorious virtue. Hence she not only detested those infernal fashions suggested by the devil for the ruin of souls, but avoided even the slightest faults against modesty. She usually went with her eyes cast down, but without affectation, and her look, though penetrating, was the reflex of the candour of her soul. Her gait, her gestures, her movements, whether alone or in company, were ever regulated by decency and modesty. In her talk she carefully avoided even those expressions which, though innocent enough, might excite some objectionable idea. It is clear that one who took such precautions against insignificant defects would more carefully avoid real faults of the tongue. Not even in joke would she tolerate a lie or any exaggeration. She abhorred flattery and backbiting. Her acquaintances took good care to avoid talking of their neighbours' faults in her presence, for they knew that she would not only stop such conversation by every means her prudence might suggest, but that, besides, it caused her great pain.

It may be said that Albina led in the world the life of a nun. She had no vow of obedience, but she was so punctual in carrying out her director's suggestions in things spiritual, and her mother's in domestic affairs, that in this she might be held up as a model to observant religious. One day, in order to prove her, her confessor prohibited her from going to communion for a week; and notwithstanding the hunger she had to receive Jesus, she bore it with as much peace as if it were a matter of indifference to her. On another occasion she had promised to go with her mother and another female friend to see the procession of Corpus Christi in the Vatican, but gave up the engagement as soon as her director told her to do so. We have already mentioned her readiness to please her mother. The poor woman in her old age was sometimes ill-humoured and cross.



On these occasions Albina laboured to console her and lighten her troubles in this exile; and if at any time she unintentionally caused her pain by word or deed, she would with filial affection kiss her hand, and rest not till she soothed and calmed her down. How often in her mother's attacks of sickness did Albina deprive herself of necessities, that she might be the better able to attend to her wants! As to her love of poverty, suffice it to say that, though from her industry she could have risen to a better position, she never would abandon her humble lot, but distributed among the poor all that her great charity suggested.

Through obedience and love of her neighbour she accepted the presidency of the Christian doctrine in her parish, and afterwards became director of the confraternity of St. Dorothy, established for the instruction of poor children in their Christian duties, and to rescue them from the ruin to which an idle and vagabond life exposed them. The love entertained for her by assistants and children was wonderful. The former looked on her as a saint, and the latter was ready to do anything their good mistress, as they called her, should tell them. She gained their hearts by her prudence and sweetness, and suited herself to the tastes and inclinations of each. But her charity and modesty shone with greatest brilliancy in her own workshop. Justice in her dealings, fortitude in not offending God to please feminine whims, humility in bearing with the impertinence of her customers, vigilance over the conduct of her assistants, are virtues which rendered Albina an exemplary dressmaker. Punctual in keeping her word, she never undertook anything she could not do in the time named. When she met with unforeseen difficulties she worked sometimes the whole night herself to keep her promises, without requiring her girls to stay an hour beyond their time. The price she asked for her labour was very

moderate; but, as often happens in the case of persons given to luxury, from some she could get nothing, and from others only abuse, which she bore with Christian charity and patience. A pious heart never repays insults with insults. She made herself loved for her honesty and sweetness—honesty in returning any surplus stuff, and sweetness in hearing and attending to all classes of persons. She was intolerant only when asked to make any indecorous dress, or required to work on festival days to please some whim. “How is this,” she would courageously answer, “if you don’t wish me to obey the laws of God, go elsewhere, for He will provide for me.” And yet, how many there are who assign the loss of their customers as a pretext for working on these days! as if God could fail in His promise when He says: “Seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you.” Should they not rather fear that the wrath of God, enkindled by their breach of His law, may work their ruin? By her proper conduct, Albina, far from losing customers, daily attached them to her more and more, so that she employed almost constantly from six to eight assistants, and was often obliged to work at night to satisfy the demand.

And the work-girls gained a great deal by her side, They spent the hours of labour very pleasantly, sometimes in listening to the stories about saints which their mistress told, sometimes in attending to the explanation of the Christian doctrine which she gave them; now in singing pious hymns, and often in innocent and amusing conversation, without ever referring to things by which their neighbour’s character might be injured, or the purity of their own conscience sullied. As far as modesty of dress was concerned she never gave them the slightest dispensation, no matter how warm the weather might be: but as they saw their mistress first in everything good, they usually obeyed her without any

repugnance. If by chance anyone came who would not conform to Albina's wishes, she brought all the resources of her Christian zeal into play, and generally succeeded in bringing her round. But she would not put up with stiffneckedness. A young girl was once recommended to her of rather a haughty spirit, and too fond of vanities, and our dressmaker received her, thinking she might be able to influence her for good. She frequently took her out with her, and showed her marks of affection and deference; in a word, she lost no opportunity of gaining her good-will, that she might the more willingly receive her advice. But all to no purpose, for the girl became hardened in her wrong views, and Albina had to dismiss her lest she might contaminate the others; but she did not do so without consulting her confessor on the matter, and getting his approbation of the course she intended to take. Her vigilance over her work-girls was not confined to the shop, but extended to every place possible. She learned from their parents what their conduct was at home, she observed who their companions were, and inquired what places they frequented. If any of them, under the specious pretext that she could not work for herself during the week, should labour on a festival day, she would soon receive an affectionate rebuke, and would be told by her good mistress that she should sacrifice her rest and recreation sooner than allow herself such a liberty. She wished the Lord's day to be faithfully observed; and to show them that virtue is not opposed to innocent amusement, she would sometimes take them out to a pic-nic as if they were her own daughters. She inspired them with an abhorrence of vanity and luxury; and that they might pay more attention to her advice, she often took occasion from the very work they were engaged on to make them conceive a stronger hatred of vanity and superfluity.

And thus Albina increased her incalculable merits. However, she was yet far from the height to which God

called her, and He shortened the road by sending her new and acute diseases. We say new diseases, for she had but very indifferent health, and sometimes was obliged to keep her bed. But in her previous attacks, whether from her love of labour, or in order to keep her house, as soon as she felt any relief she would pursue her work even in bed, and give directions to her assistants; but the last, which attacked her about Christmas, 1840, did not allow her even this relief. She soon foresaw it would be the last. Talking one day to one of her friends, and invited by her to visit the cemetery of St. Laurence: "Yes," said she, "they will soon carry me dead to see it." A week before she fell sick she was so unusually anxious to finish the work on hands, that the girls were astonished, and said to her: "What makes you so uneasy? There is no hurry with this." It is to be presumed that the Lord revealed to her the day of her death. Two or three days after she was quite gay, and said to them: "What a happy day I spent yesterday!" And ever after she preserved this ineffable joy. She anxiously longed for her spiritual father's return, and prayed so hard for it, that in the end she obtained her wish. And, indeed, he came back unexpectedly, and impelled by some inexplicable impulse, as he said himself, and the first words which he heard from his spiritual daughter's lips were: "Ah, father, how I have prayed to God that you might return as quickly as possible, for I was afraid I should die without bidding you good-bye."

Two days after, at nightfall on Saturday, the 20th of November, when she dismissed her assistants, she told her mother that she felt ill. And, indeed, fever had set in, accompanied by acute pains in her joints, which soon spread to her whole body. They thought it was a rheumatic attack brought on by exposing herself after copious perspiration. They applied remedies, and at first there were hopes that she should get well; but

when the young work-girls came on the following Monday she dismissed them. "My children," said she, "go home and divide the customers among you; pay attention to them, for I can give you no more work. Love one another as you have done up to this, and do not forget to pray to God for me." Great, indeed, was their surprise at this, and looking at one another they knew not what to answer. Teresa, who was present, instantly replied: "But what is the meaning of this, daughter? what is this you say?" Her poor mother, who had often seen her apparently worse than at present; and yet, in order to keep her customers, working in bed, insisted on knowing what she meant. "Ah," replied Albina, "if God would free me from this martyrdom!" "What," answered Teresa, "won't we always need to work in order to live?" "Yes," said her daughter, in order to put her off, "but you see, when I was often sick before, the customers complained that the work was not well done; the girls will be more comfortable in their own houses, and the sewing better done. . . ." She then applied herself to the regulation of her affairs; not to making a will, indeed, for she had nothing to leave, but to arranging and settling her accounts. As they required every penny they could dispose of to meet their creditors' claims, her mother complained that they should have nothing to live on, and Albina answered, with her habitual confidence: "Do not fear, mother: let us think of to-day, and God will provide for to-morrow." Having arranged her temporal affairs, she now thought only of preparing herself for death, and soothing her beloved mother. She disposed herself to duly receive the last sacraments. On the eve of receiving her dear Jesus in the Viaticum, she was ravished with joy in the midst of her acute pains. She said to her assistants, who surrounded her bed: "I invite you all to-morrow, without fail. Oh! to-morrow is a feast-day for me; it is a great feast-day!" Accustomed to go to

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communion with ineffable satisfaction at least twice a week, the fervour with which she now received her Divine Spouse is indescribable. All present wept for devotion on seeing the joy and inflamed love that were depicted on her countenance.

The illness momentarily increased, till it reduced the patient to a most deplorable state. Mortal pains, horrible spasms, occasioned by the intensity of her sufferings, and a burning fever, caused her the agony of the cross; but all did not rob her for one moment of her serenity of countenance or interior calm. In a modest posture, with her hands crossed on her bosom, she was absorbed in contemplation of the sufferings of Jesus crucified. A friend said, to encourage her: "Bear all for love of Jesus Christ!" "For whom should we bear it," she answered, "if not for Him?" One Friday, talking to another friend, she said: "To-day my pains are sweeter." And no matter what thirst she suffered she refused to drink, exclaiming: "My Jesus felt so great thirst, it is right that I should suffer some too." When they wished to turn her from one side to the other, as she was quite feeble, she gently opposed them, saying: "My Jesus was nailed to a cross, and must I look for relief? It is true I am suffering, but should I not suffer more." At other times she would repeat, with St. Teresa: "My Jesus! to suffer, or to die!" And, indeed, her pains were very intense, for the rheumatism appeared to dislocate her joints, or drive sharp nails through them. Sometimes the violence of the attack would draw an involuntary groan from her, and then she would reprove herself, as if she had committed a fault, and say: "This miserable body wants to suffer nothing!" Not even once did she complain of the persons attending her, regretting only that they took such pains to relieve her sufferings. Another cause of regret to her was to see people of every class come to be edified by her example, for her profound humility could not bear such appreciation and esteem.

With great pleasure, however, she received her female friends and her work-girls. One day, when she had them all round her bed, like a tender mother she took leave of them so affectionately, and gave them so prudent an advice, that seeing they were about to lose so loving and good a mother, they all burst into tears. Albina alone remained calm. With her eyes fixed on heaven, and filled with inexplicable joy, she encouraged them to tread the path of life, and walk in the footsteps of their Divine Master. With her mother, however, she was very guarded, never speaking to her of her proximate departure, and endeavouring to blunt the pain her illness caused her. But when she was given up by the doctors, she sought a suitable occasion to bid her farewell, as a good daughter should. One day, when she was weeping at her bedside, Albina said to her, with great sweetness and confidence: "Do not weep, mother, do not weep. Jesus and Mary are calling me, and I must go; but have no fear, for the Lord will take care of you, and will place you in a better position than you have had up to this." And so it afterwards happened. That the instruments of penance bequeathed to her by Father Poggiarelli might not be found, she handed them over to her confessor. Freed now from all worldly cares, and from everything that might gain her credit among men, she thought only of heaven and eternity. She counted the days to the feast of the Blessed Virgin as if it were to be the day of her wedding, or the beginning of her eternal glory. When that eve arrived she could not contain her joy, and cried out in gladness: "What a feast to-morrow will be in heaven! What a feast! . . . To-morrow all in heaven . . . all . . ." Her pains increased, and they thought she would die that night. But she hoped to go to celebrate the feast of the Immaculate at mid-day, and so it happened. One of her friends said to her, as if she were sure of heaven: "Albina, when you are in glory, pray for me." "Hold

your tongue," she answered, "for you must go there too." She thought she was already entering the eternal portals. The fear of the strict account which so much impressed her during life disappeared in those moments, and left her full of confidence in the merits of Jesus Christ. That night she spent without sleep or food, engaged in fervent and sweet affections, in intimate communion with God, so that the priest who attended her had no occasion to suggest any ejaculations to her. At nine o'clock in the morning some symptoms of death were noticed. A little before the recommendation of a soul departing, a friend offered her a crucifix, which Albina fervently kissed, and gathering the little strength which remained, she exclaimed: "My Jesus, I love Thee above all things." These were her last words. At half-past eleven she lost her sight, and entered on a sweet and peaceful agony. At twelve she slept in the Lord, at forty-eight years and eight months of age. She died so poor, that she did not leave enough to defray her funeral. But three persons who admired her virtues paid all expenses. The confraternity also celebrated a solemn office for her, at which a great concourse of people attended, including most of the associates, who venerated her as a saint. Thus did God repay the generosity with which she had Mass celebrated for others during her life. Those who knew her envied her lot, and said: "Oh! how happy for her! she was truly a saint!" Such was the current opinion in those days.

Her desolate mother was taken into the house of a worthy person, who treated her with every consideration, according to Albina's prediction. Admirable effects were not wanting to confirm our dressmaker's virtues. An afflicted mother asked her during life to bless her boy, who was for several years subject to epileptic fits: Albina made the sign of the cross on him, with a medal of the Blessed Virgin, and the boy never had another



attack. After her death two of her female friends implored her aid to cure them of a severe headache, and by using one of her haircombs they were completely relieved.

I pray God that a life so exemplary, and so capable of imitation by all classes, may encourage many to walk in her footsteps.

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## Reading from the History of the Holy Family.

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### THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS AND THE DEATH OF MARY.

THE machinations of man can effect nothing against the plans of the Lord, but, on the contrary, often contribute to their realisation. At nightfall on the day of the pasch, which was looked on as part of the following day, the holy women went to buy the ointments and spices necessary to embalm the body of Jesus. On Sunday morning they went very early to Calvary, provided with everything required for this purpose. But in the sepulchre had taken place a scene very different from what they were thinking. In the midst of an earthquake an angel had come down from heaven to remove the stone which covered it. Jesus had arisen a glorious conqueror over death and sin. The guards, at sight of the angel, whose countenance shone like light-

ning, and whose garments were white as snow, were astounded.

The pious women pursued their way, asking each other who would remove for them the stone, that they might perform their religious ceremony; but to their great surprise, they found the stone away, and the sepulchre open. They entered into the place where He had been and found it vacant. They were alarmed, and scarcely knew what they were doing, when there appeared to them two angels in human form, clothed in white, and brilliant as the sun, who said to them: "Be not affrighted: you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified: he is risen, he is not here, behold the place where they laid him. But go tell his disciples and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee." Mary Magdalen, more active than the others, flew to tell the news to the apostles, and assured them that the body of Jesus was not in the sepulchre.

Peter and John ran on the moment to see with their own eyes what had happened. John, being the younger, arrived first; but in deference to Peter he did not enter till he had arrived. Now they could have no doubt of the truth of what Magdalen had told them; for in the sepulchre they only found the linen cloths and the napkin folded up. When their curiosity was satisfied, they returned to Jerusalem, leaving Mary weeping beside the grave. Sad and pensive, she bent down to look in, and she saw two angels, one at the head and one at the feet of where our Saviour lay, who said to her: "Woman, why weepest thou?" And she answered: "Because they have taken away my Lord; and I know not where they have laid Him." Hearing a noise, or from some other cause, she turned round, and near her she saw a man, whom she took to be the gardener. And He said to her: "Woman, why weepest thou?—whom seekest thou?" "Sir," answered she, "if thou hast taken him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him;

and I will take him away." "Mary," said the gardener. And on the moment she recognised Jesus, and exclaimed: "Master," and she threw herself at his feet to kiss them. But our Lord added: "Do not touch me, for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say to them: I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." Then our Saviour disappeared, and Mary returned to Jerusalem full of joy, and told the disciples the vision with which Jesus had favoured her.

He had also appeared to the other women when they were returning from the sepulchre, and they reported it to their brethren, the Apostles; but the latter looked on them as visionaries, and would not believe in such apparitions.

In the meantime the guards, when they recovered from their alarm, had run to the city, and told the priests of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They were confused at the news, and calling a council, they gave money to the soldiers to say that when they were asleep the Apostles had stolen the body of Jesus. Trustworthy witnesses, who, though asleep, had seen the thieves!

On the same day, Sunday, the 16th of Nisan, two disciples of the Messiah were going to Emaus, two leagues and a half from Jerusalem, and were speaking on the way of the events which had occurred in the deicide city. Our Saviour joined them in the form of a pilgrim, and asked them what they were talking about. Cleophas, one of them, answered: "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things that have been done there in these days?" "What things?" said He. And they recounted to Him the passion, and concluded in these words: "We hoped that it was He that should have redeemed Israel: and now, besides all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done." Then our Saviour went over the prophecies, and showed

them how the Redeemer should suffer these torments, and thereby enter into glory. When they reached Emaus, our Saviour pretended to go farther, but they invited Him to remain with them. Jesus accepted the invitation. And when they were at supper our Divine Master took bread, and blessed, or consecrated it, and gave it to them to eat. With that the eyes of the two disciples were opened, and they recognised our Redeemer in the traveller, and immediately He vanished from their sight. Then, in astonishment they said one to another: "Was not our heart burning within us whilst He spoke in the way?" And on the moment they left Emaus to go to Jerusalem and tell their companions the happy news.

Joyfully they recounted what had passed, and heard with no less pleasure what had happened to Peter and the women, when Jesus, without opening the doors, which were closed, stood in their midst, and said: "Peace be to you; it is I; fear not." Seeing that notwithstanding they were alarmed, because they supposed they saw a spirit, He animated them by telling them to handle his hands and feet; "for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see me to have;" and to thoroughly convince them that it was the same Jesus Christ who had so often spoken with them, He asked them if they had anything to eat. "And they offered Him a piece of broiled fish, and a honeycomb." He ate, and asked them to join Him. Seeing that now no one doubted His reality, He explained to them the Scriptures, and showed them the necessity of the sufferings which had so scandalised them. Finally, after again wishing them His peace, He breathed on them, and said: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them: and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." Such is the origin of the Sacrament of Penance, that tribunal of mercy in which the penitent receives consolation, direction, and aid for their souls.

How can we better repay such a favour than by having frequent recourse to this divine tribunal to preserve our soul free from all stain ?

“Now Thomas, one of the twelve, who is called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.” And when they told him that Jesus had appeared to them, he said : “Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.” Eight days after the Apostles were again gathered together, and Thomas was with them. When least expected, Jesus suddenly presented himself, and, as usual, wished them peace. Then He turned to Thomas, and said : “Put in thy finger hither, and see my hands, and bring hither thy hand, and put it into my side ; and be not faithless, but believing !” Then Thomas exclaimed : “My Lord, and my God.” But Jesus said to him : “Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed : blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed.”

Among the many occasions on which He appeared to them, one near the Sea of Tiberias deserves special mention. Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, John, and other disciples had gone to fish. They were tired labouring the whole night, without taking anything, when in the morning an unknown man presented himself, and asked if they had caught anything. When they answered in the negative, He told them to cast their nets to the right of the ship, and promised them a great take. They did as He told them, and they took such a number of fish, that they could not draw the net it was so full. John then knew that the stranger was Jesus, and he said to Peter : “It is the Lord.” When Simon heard it was the Lord, he put on his dress, and jumped into the sea in order to reach his Master’s feet more quickly. The others gained land by rowing, drawing after them the

net. Then they went to salute Jesus, whom they found near the shore, and beside Him was a fire lit, on whose embers a fish was broiling. The Lord told them to bring one of those they had caught. Peter went, and found that they had taken one hundred and fifty-three large ones, without the net breaking. Our Saviour invited them to join Him, saying, "Come and eat." And no one asked Him who He was, for well they all knew that it was Jesus. Having eaten, our Redeemer turned to Peter, and asked him: "Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," said Peter, "Thou knowest that I love Thee." And he asked him again: "Simon, son of John, lovest thou me?" "Yea, Lord," answered Peter, "thou knowest that I love Thee." And at both answers our Saviour said: "Feed my lambs." And then a third time He asked him: "Simon, son of John, lovest thou me?" Peter was grieved at hearing Jesus repeat the same question, and he answered: "Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love Thee." And then our Saviour told him to feed His sheep, adding, by way of prophecy, with regard to the death he should die: "When thou wast younger, thou didst gird thyself, and didst walk where thou wouldst. But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and lead thee whither thou wouldst not." At last all arose, and our Lord said to Peter: "Follow me." Simon followed Him, and seeing that John was also following, he said to our Saviour: "Lord, and what shall this man do?" Jesus answered: "So I will have him to remain till I come, what is it to thee? Follow thou me." From that a rumour was spread among the disciples that John should not die; but Jesus said nothing of the kind. This also was the foundation which some afterwards erroneously had for holding that John, the beloved disciple, did not die.

The time now drawing to a close that our Lord wished to remain in this exile, He announced to them the day of His ascension to heaven, and invited all His disciples to go to a certain mountain of Galilee, to receive His last benediction. The eleven Apostles were dining when Jesus Christ appeared to them, and upbraided them with their incredulity and hardness of heart. Notwithstanding, He confirmed all the faculties He had granted them, saying: "Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be condemned. And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." They then went together to Bethania, which was the place appointed for the last farewell. There were more than five hundred disciples to whom He appeared at one time; and likely all these and many more gathered together to see and hear Him for the last time. In presence of this great multitude, He raised His hands to heaven, and blessed them, and at the same time began to rise majestically in the air, to the great astonishment of them all. They kept their eyes fixed on their divine and glorious Master, till a bright cloud interposed, and deprived them of so agreeable a sight. They continued, however, with their eyes fixed on heaven, till two beautiful angels appeared to them, and said: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking up to heaven? This Jesus, who is taken up from ye into heaven, shall so come as you have seen Him going into heaven." Then, after adoring their blessed Master in spirit, they went to Jerusalem to prepare for the coming of the Holy Ghost, as our Lord had told them.

Here the greater number of them were gathered together, under the direction of the Blessed Virgin, and gave themselves up to assiduous prayer in preparation for so extraordinary a favour. In this interval they elected



**Mathias** as one of the apostles, in place of the unfortunate Judas, who had hanged himself. On the day of Pentecost, in the midst of sudden thunder, the house in which the apostles and disciples were congregated was illuminated, and the Holy Ghost descended on each in the form of tongues of fire. By virtue of this they were all transformed, filled with grace, clothed with celestial wisdom, and endowed with the gift of tongues; so that now these rude fishermen spoke wonders, and all their hearers, who flocked to them from different nations, understood them as if they spoke in their own language.

At Peter's first sermon, addressed to a congregation composed of Parthians, and Medes, and Elemites, and inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphilia, Egypt and the parts of Lybia about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews also and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, three thousand people from these different places were converted.

Though the Apostles were clothed with supernatural wisdom, they yet had recourse to the Queen of Angels, as their mistress and teacher, and she told them all she had hitherto pondered in her heart about the private and public life of her Divine Son. Under the shadow of this loving Mother the faithful grew in all kinds of virtue, and principally in charity and self-negation, which made them all one family, according to the maxims of the Redeemer of the world.

As regards the dwelling-place of Mary, it is indubitable that she lived with St. John the Evangelist, to whom our Lord had recommended her. It is believed by some that after the dispersion of the Apostles the beloved disciple took her with him to Ephesus, where she delivered up her spirit to her Son and God, at a very advanced age; whilst others say she died in Jerusalem,

and that her sepulchre is in Gethsemani. No doubt a true or false grave is there pointed out in a magnificent church dedicated to the name of Mary. Be this as it may, what is true, and what can only be called in doubt by men suspicious in faith is, that the Virgin rose like her Son by the virtue of God, and her body and soul were taken to heaven, there to reign for all eternity.

Here is how St. John Damascene describes this event:

“Though the Apostles were dispersed through the world, preaching the Gospel, moved by an impulse and particular providence, they collected together in Jerusalem, and attended at the death of her who was their encouragement in their labours, their consolation in their afflictions, their instructress in their doubts, and the loving Mother of the whole infant Church, as she now in heaven continues to be. When she was dead they went in procession to bury her body in the valley of Gethsemani, when celestial music was heard for three days. At the end of that time, the only apostle who was absent—St. Thomas—arrived in the Holy City. Being anxious to see the venerable remains of her who was the Mother of Jesus, and is our mother too, they accompanied him to the sepulchre to venerate the sacred deposit; but to their great surprise, they found it empty, with evident signs that the body, reanimated by the soul of the Immaculate Virgin, had gone to glory to receive the crown of Empress of heaven and earth, and to plead for all our necessities.”

This is the compendium of the history of the Holy Family. Almost the only source from which I have drawn this precious account is the Holy Scripture. In its personages, the greatest and most celebrated mentioned in the annals of the world, we find perfect models to imitate, let the business we are engaged in be as

humble as it may. Everything is enobled by virtue and purity of intention. Let us, then, walk in the footsteps of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, and we shall one day come to reign with them in reward of our humble occupations, pursued to the satisfaction of Him who is the Sovereign Master of all our works.





